

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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Statement on Committee Report on Secret Service Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings December 9, 2015

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me start by commending you for the bipartisan way you have conducted this investigation. You asked us to join as partners in this effort, you consulted with us regarding requests for documents, and you invited us to meetings and briefings over the past year—including with some whistleblowers.

You also asked for our input in drafting this report. For the past several weeks—including over the Thanksgiving holiday—our staffs worked to make sure that every Member of our Committee could support this report.

Your approach stands in stark contrast to the way things were done on this Committee for several years before you became Chairman. Your bipartisan approach has had a number of positive effects. It encouraged all Committee Members to be invested in our work, it produced what I believe is a much better final product, and most importantly, it now conveys to the agency a united and unanimous call to action.

Of course, we did not agree on everything, and there were bumps along the road. But we listened to each other, and we identified those findings and recommendations we could all agree on. As a result, I believe this report makes a much stronger impact than if it were a partisan and unvetted staff report without the full buy-in of this Committee.

Turning to the report, it paints a distressing picture of an agency in crisis. I was outraged when I read some of the emails between these Secret Service employees. Some were sent to dozens and dozens of people with a brazenness that suggests deplorable behavior was widely tolerated. There is simply no excuse for this kind of behavior, especially among individuals we expect to be the most elite law enforcement officials in the world.

The report also demonstrates that the agency has been mismanaged for years, and it will take strong bipartisan efforts to restore it. For too long, the agency has been slipping into a culture of mediocrity.

The report makes several key findings that are particularly important. The report finds that the Secret Service is facing a staffing crisis that began in 2011 when Congress passed the Budget Control Act. In that year, Congress set a terrible new record by providing the Secret Service with \$56 million less than the President requested. That deficit was the largest single-

year difference between a President's request and a Congressional appropriation for any year for which the Committee obtained data.

Two years later, in 2013, Congress beat this notorious historical record. It approved \$77 million less than the President requested. In fact, from 2011 to 2013, Congress approved a total of \$165 million less than the amounts the President requested for the Secret Service. As a result, staffing dropped off a cliff, with major declines in every single year from 2011 until today.

Before I continue, let me make one thing abundantly clear: budget cuts and staffing declines in no way justify some of the activities that are recounted in this report. As I said, there is simply no excuse for some of the unacceptable behavior we have seen.

However, the cumulative effects of making some of the biggest budget cuts in history, slashing staffing levels by the hundreds, overburdening agents and officers, demanding excessive overtime, yanking personnel from one location to another, and cutting back on critical training—all of these forces have taken their toll on the Secret Service workforce. They degrade the mission, reduce effectiveness, impair morale, aggravate attrition, and deter the best and the brightest from even applying to serve at the agency.

Yesterday, the Partnership for Public Service issued its annual report on the best places to work in the federal government. Of the 320 different offices and agencies surveyed, the Secret Service ranked 319, almost dead last.

This is what needs to change. I am encouraged that our report recommends full funding of the President's budget request, provided that the Secret Service implements reforms necessary to address these challenges. We need a strong and bipartisan commitment to helping this agency and its workforce. We need to focus on measures to promote a renewed sense of pride among individuals who dedicate their careers and their lives to this critical mission.

For these reasons, I urge all Members to support adoption of the report. Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

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