Dear Colleague:

Several offices have contacted the Committee on House Administration, the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (Franking Commission) and the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Standards Committee) to inquire about the extent to which official resources may be used to help those impacted by the devastating earthquake that occurred in Haiti on Tuesday, January 12, 2010. We would like to take this opportunity to provide a review of the applicable rules, regulations and procedures.

There are many international, federal, state, and local government agencies and departments responsible for providing or coordinating the delivery of U.S. aid and participation in the relief efforts. Telephone numbers and other contact information for several of the key agencies, departments and organizations can be found at the following websites:

**The White House**
http://www.whitehouse.gov/haitiearthquake_embed

**U.S. Department of State**
http://www.state.gov/

**Organization of American States**
http://www.oas.org/en/

**United Nations**
http://www.un.org/en

**U.S. Geological Survey**

**United States Agency for International Development’s Office of Foreign Disaster (USAID)**
http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/disaster_assistance/
In addition, to assist Americans seeking information about family members in Haiti, the
U.S. Department of State’s Operations Center has established the following hotline
number: 1-888-407-4747. The Department advises that due to heavy volume, some
collectors may receive a recording. Further, the Department cautions that the information
being sought may not yet be available as our embassy is still in the early stages of
contacting American Citizens known to be in Haiti. Communications, as you might expect,
are very difficult within Haiti at this time.

All of the above information may be communicated to your constituents via the usual and
customary official communication tools, including your congressional frank, subject to
applicable statute and House Rules and regulations. In addition, a Member may post on
his or her official Web site(s), channels and pages (sites) a directory of and/or links to
third party organizations that are germane to the official content of his or her official
postings. Referrals to organizations or links to sites, the primary purpose of which is the
solicitation of goods, funds or services on behalf of individuals or organizations are not
permitted under the rules of the House.

In addition, Members have asked to what extent they may use their official resources to
solicit or collect donations of goods, funds, or services on behalf of charities and other
private organizations involved in relief efforts.

We understand the good intentions of those making such inquiries, but the rules of the
House preclude Members from using official resources for any purpose other than in
support of the conduct of the Member’s official and representational duties on behalf of
the district which he or she currently represents. This has, in the past, been interpreted
to mean that charitable solicitations using official resources are not permitted.

However, it would be permissible for Members to link to official government Web sites
that give details about the delivery of relief aid, including information about how
Members’ constituents may provide aid and assistance during a crisis. With respect to the
emergency in Haiti, it would be permissible to provide links to any of the government Web
sites noted above, including to the official White House Web page for the crisis
(http://www.whitehouse.gov/haitiearthquake_embed), or to the State Department’s Web
page (http://www.state.gov/p/wha/ci/ha/). It would also be permissible to notify
constituents about the existence of these Web sites, provided that the franking
regulations are followed.

While official resources may not be used to solicit contributions for charitable
organizations or to imply that such organizations or purposes have been endorsed by the
House of Representatives, Members and staff may solicit in their personal capacities on
behalf of organizations that are qualified under § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code –
including, for example, § 501(c)(3) charitable organizations such as the American Red
Cross – without first obtaining Standards Committee approval. These personal efforts
may not use official resources (including official time, telephones, office equipment,
supplies, and official mailing lists). Other restrictions also apply. Solicitations on behalf
of non-qualified entities or individuals are decided on a case-by-case basis through the
submission to the Standards Committee of a written request for permission to make such
solicitations. For example, solicitations of donations directly for individuals suffering as a
result of the crisis, as opposed to § 501(c)(3) charities assisting sufferers, would need
Standards Committee approval. For more information, please review the 2008 Ethics

Manual (pp. 347-49) or contact the Standards Committee at 5-7103.

We understand that Members of the House may wish to assist during this time of tragedy in Haiti and we hope this information is helpful to you to inform your constituency of our nation’s response, the aid and resources supporting the relief efforts, and the status of Haiti’s recovery in the aftermath of this devastating quake. If you have any questions regarding the use of your:

1. Official resources in general, please contact the House Administration Committee at x52061 (majority) or x58281 (minority);

2. Communications resources, please contact the Franking Commission at x59337 (majority) or x60647 (minority); and/or

3. Personal and/or campaign resources or the loan of your name and title to private solicitations and initiatives in support of the relief efforts, please contact the Standards of Official Conduct Committee at x57103

Sincerely,

Robert A. Brady                                      Daniel E. Lungren
Chairman                                                Ranking Minority
Member                                             Committee on House Administration
Committee on House Administration                               Committee on House Administration

Zoe Lofgren                                      Jo Bonner
Chairwoman                                             Ranking Minority
Member                                           Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct