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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 27, 2020

**REPUBLICAN STUDY COMMITTEE**  
**CHAIRMAN**

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION, CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND CIVIL LIBERTIES

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The Hon. Adam B. Schiff  
Chairman  
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence  
U.S. House of Representatives  
HVC-304, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to you today to express concern over reports that the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) has leaked classified information pertaining to the integrity of our federal elections.

On February 20, *The New York Times* reported that HPSCI received a classified briefing on Russian interference in the 2020 presidential election. As you know, both the occasion and the content of these meetings are highly sensitive and are thus designed to remain secret. This protocol is important to safeguard classified information, and to prevent alerting foreign adversaries about the focus of our own defensive priorities to counter foreign election influence.

The candidate-specific subject matter reported by *The New York Times*,<sup>1</sup> coupled with additional reports the next day of Russian influence favoring Senator Bernie Sanders in the Democratic presidential primary,<sup>2</sup> are enough to raise serious concerns surrounding the possibility of selective leaking of information by your committee or an adjacent source.

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee, the principal committee in Congress tasked with oversight of the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), I believe it is essential that the Congress take seriously the protection of classified information to avoid any and all unauthorized leaks to the media.

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<sup>1</sup> Adam Goldman, Julian E. Barnes, Maggie Haberman and Nicholas Fandos, *Lawmakers Are Warned That Russia Is Meddling to Re-elect Trump*, New York Times, Feb. 20, 2020  
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/20/us/politics/russian-interferencetrumpdemocrats.html?searchResultPosition=3>

<sup>2</sup> Dustin Volz, *Bernie Sanders Was Warned Russia Is Trying to Boost His Presidential Campaign*, Wall Street Journal, Feb. 21, 2020  
<https://www.wsj.com/articles/bernie-sanders-was-warned-russia-is-trying-to-boost-his-presidential-campaign>

Based upon the newspaper reports last week, can you please answer the following questions:

1. What steps, if any, have you or your staff taken to investigate the sources of the leaks pertaining to the classified briefing on Russian interference in the 2020 presidential election?
2. Has a plan been formulated to more closely protect classified or sensitive information shared with your committee, particularly information related to the 2020 election cycle?
3. Has your committee pursued an investigation of these leaks in conjunction with entities such as the DOJ or FBI, which are typically called upon when classified information of this kind makes it into the public domain?

I believe these questions and my concerns are appropriate and are in fact consistent with your own public statements in recent years. For example, in 2015, you raised alarm when the House Select Committee on Benghazi was apparently leaking information that was perceived to harm former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In an appearance at that time on *Meet the Press*, you stated: “The way this committee has operated is by leak of damaging information with only one objective. And that is, all the leaks have a common denominator. All of the leaks are designed to hurt Secretary Clinton.”<sup>3</sup>

Congress has an obligation to address these issues directly to ensure that all classified information is handled and protected appropriately, and that the integrity of our elections and institutions are maintained.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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Mike Johnson  
Member of Congress

CC: The Hon. Devin Nunes, Ranking Member, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

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<sup>3</sup> Meet the Press Transcript - October 18, 2015, NBC News (2015). <https://www.nbcnews.com/meet-the-press/meet-press-transcript-october-18-2015-n446721> (last visited Feb 25, 2020).