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5 COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS,

6 U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

7 WASHINGTON, D.C.

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12 INTERVIEW OF: TYLER ROBINSON

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Monday, June 3, 2024

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Washington, D.C.

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The interview in the above matter was held in room 6400, O'Neill House Office

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Building, commencing at 10:02 a.m.

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2 Appearances:

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5 For the COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS:

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7 ALEX ALBRECHT, COUNSEL

8 ANDREW COFFIELD, PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBER

9 CHRIS ECKHARDT, LAW CLERK

10 LAUREN HOLMES, GENERAL COUNSEL

11 RENATA BECA-BARRAGAN, MINORITY SENIOR COUNSEL

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15 For the SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION:

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17 THERESE MEERS, GENERAL COUNSEL

18 JUAN SEMPETEGUI, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL

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2 For TYLER ROBINSON:

3

4 SUSANNE SACHSMAN GROOMS

5 HEATHER SAWYER

6 ROBERT DENNISTON

7 Cooley LLP

1           Ms. Holmes. This is a transcribed interview of Mr. Tyler Robinson, conducted by  
2 the Committee on Small Business under the authority granted under House rule X and the  
3 rules of the Committee on Small Business. This interview was requested by  
4 Chairman Williams as part of the committee's oversight of the Small Business  
5 Administration's voter registration efforts.

6           Can the witness please state his name and spell their last name for the record?

7           Mr. Robinson. Tyler Robinson, R-o-b-i-n-s-o-n.

8           Ms. Holmes. Thank you.

9           Mr. Robinson, my name is Lauren Holmes, and I'm the general counsel for the  
10 Committee on Small Business, and I want to thank you for coming in here today. The  
11 committee recognizes you're here voluntarily, and we appreciate that.

12           Under the committee's rules, you are allowed to have an attorney present to  
13 advise you during this interview. Do you have an attorney representing you in a  
14 personal capacity present with you today?

15           Mr. Robinson. Yes.

16           Ms. Holmes. Can the attorneys please -- I guess we'll just go down the  
17 line -- state your name for the record?

18           Ms. Grooms. Sure. My name is Susanne Sachsman Grooms. I'm from Cooley.  
19 I have with me two attorneys from Cooley.

20           Ms. Sawyer. Heather Sawyer from Cooley, representing Mr. Robinson.

21           Mr. Denniston. Robert Denniston from Cooley, representing Mr. Robinson.

22           Ms. Holmes. Thank you.

23           Is there also an attorney present representing the agency today?

24           Ms. Meers. Yes, there is.

25           Ms. Holmes. Will the counsels please identify themselves for the record?

1 Ms. Meers. Yes, we will. Therese Meers, general counsel for the SBA, agency  
2 counsel.

3 Mr. Sempertegui. Juan Sempertegui, deputy general counsel, representing SBA.

4 Mr. Cantlon. Jaime Cantlon, associate general counsel, representing SBA.

5 Ms. Holmes. And then also the final SBA member?

6 Mr. Holman. George Holman, associate administrator for congressional and  
7 legislative affairs.

8 Ms. Holmes. Thank you.

9 For the record, starting with majority staff, can the additional staff members  
10 please introduce themselves with their name, title, and affiliation?

11 Mr. Eckhardt. Christopher Eckhardt, law clerk to the majority staff with the  
12 House Small Business Committee.

13 Mr. Albrecht. Alex Albrecht, counsel for the majority staff for the House Small  
14 Business Committee.

15 Mr. Coffield. Andrew Coffield, professional staff member for the House Small  
16 Business Committee, majority.

17 Ms. Harrington. Ellen Harrington, deputy staff director, House Small Business  
18 Committee, minority staff.

19 Ms. Beca-Barragan. Renata Beca-Barragan, senior counsel, House Small Business  
20 Committee staff.

21 Ms. Holmes. Thank you.

22 Mr. Robinson, before we begin, I'm going to go over some of the ground rules for  
23 this interview.

24 As previously agreed to by counsel for Mr. Robinson and the majority staff, the  
25 scope of this interview is Mr. Robinson's knowledge of a video, the Administrator and

1 other senior officials' travel, SBA's activities related to voter registration, and the SBA or  
2 the Administrator's participation in political campaigns or political activity.

3 The way this interview will proceed is as follows: The majority and minority staff  
4 will alternate asking you questions, 1 hour per side per round, until each side is finished  
5 with our questioning. The majority staff will begin and proceed for an hour, and then  
6 minority staff will have an hour to ask questions. We will then alternate back and forth  
7 in this manner until both sides have no more questions.

8 If either side is in the middle of a specific line of questions, they may choose to  
9 end a few minutes past an hour to ensure completion of that specific line of questioning,  
10 including any pertinent followups.

11 In this interview, while one member of the staff for each side may lead the  
12 questioning, additional staff may ask questions.

13 There is a court reporter taking down everything I say and everything you say to  
14 make a written record of this interview. For the record to be clear, please wait until the  
15 staffer questioning you has finished each question before you begin your answer, and the  
16 staffer will wait until you finish your response before proceeding to the next question.

17 Further, to ensure the court reporter can properly record this interview, please  
18 speak clearly, concisely, and slowly. Also, the court reporter cannot record nonverbal  
19 answers, such as nodding or shaking your head, so it is important that you answer each  
20 question with an audible, verbal answer. Do you understand?

21 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

22 Ms. Holmes. We want you to answer our questions in the most complete and  
23 truthful manner possible, so we will take our time. If you have any questions or do not  
24 fully understand the question, please let us know and we will attempt to clarify, add  
25 context to, or rephrase our questions. Do you understand?

1           Mr. Robinson. Yes.

2           Ms. Holmes. If we ask about specific conversations or events in the past and you  
3 are unable to recall the exact words or details, you should testify to the substance of  
4 those conversations or events to the best of your recollection. If you only recall part of  
5 a conversation or event, you should give us your best recollection of those events and  
6 parts of the conversation that you do recall. Do you understand?

7           Mr. Robinson. Yes.

8           Ms. Holmes. Although you're here voluntarily and we will not swear you in, you  
9 are required, pursuant to 18 U.S.C., Section 1001, to answer questions from Congress  
10 truthfully. This also applies to questions posed by congressional staff during an  
11 interview. Do you understand?

12          Mr. Robinson. Yes.

13          Ms. Holmes. If at any time you knowingly make false statements, you could be  
14 subject to criminal prosecution. Do you understand?

15          Mr. Robinson. Yes.

16          Ms. Holmes. Is there any reason you're unable to provide truthful testimony in  
17 today's interview?

18          Mr. Robinson. No.

19          Ms. Holmes. Please note that if you wish to assert a privilege over any  
20 statement today, that assertion must apply within the rules of the House and the  
21 Committee on Small Business.

22                 For the chair to consider assertions of privilege over testimony or statements,  
23 witnesses or entities must clearly state the specific privilege being asserted and the  
24 reason for the assertion on or before the scheduled date of testimony or appearance.  
25 Do you understand?

1 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

2 Ms. Holmes. Ordinarily, we'll take a 5-minute break at the end of each hour of  
3 questioning, but if you need a longer break or a break before that, please let us know and  
4 we're happy to accommodate. However, to the extent that there is a pending question,  
5 we would ask that you finish answering the question before we take a break. Do you  
6 understand?

7 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

8 Ms. Holmes. Do you have any other questions before we begin?

9 Mr. Robinson. No.

10 Ms. Harrington. Lauren, may I ask a question, please?

11 Ms. Holmes. Absolutely.

12 Ms. Harrington. What video were you referring to on the scope?

13 Ms. Holmes. The video that Mr. Robinson was in that was on Twitter, the James  
14 O'Keefe --

15 Ms. Harrington. Okay. That one is the one that was secretly recorded?

16 Ms. Holmes. Correct.

17 Ms. Harrington. Diced and spliced?

18 Ms. Holmes. If you have objections to the video, you can make it when we get to  
19 that point.

20 Ms. Harrington. We do have objections to the video --

21 Ms. Holmes. Okay. You can make them at beginning of your hour. Thank  
22 you.

23 Ms. Harrington. Thank you.

24 Ms. Holmes. I understand you have a statement for the record, Mr. Robinson.  
25 You may go ahead and proceed.



1           Mr. Robinson. Thank you.

2           Thank you for the opportunity to say a few words before we begin this morning.

3           My name is Tyler Robinson. I am from North Carolina, and graduated from  
4           North Carolina State in 2015 with a degree in political science. I came to Washington in  
5           2022, to work for the Small Business Administration as special assistant to the  
6           Administrator, and was promoted to the position of special advisor to the Administrator  
7           late last year.

8           I'd like to make three brief points before we begin this morning. First, I would  
9           like to explain my work at the SBA. As special advisor with the rank of GS-12, I  
10          provided administrative support to Administrator Guzman. I assisted with her schedule  
11          by compiling her daily briefing book which listed each day's events and included brief  
12          background memos for her meetings. While I occasionally helped draft portions of  
13          these event memos, highlighting logistical details about the event, they were usually  
14          written by the SBA program office responsible for the subject matter of each meeting.

15          I was also part of a team that provided background and made recommendations  
16          about her schedule, but I was not responsible for the final decisions regarding her  
17          schedule or travel. I was not responsible for deciding who to invite to any given  
18          meeting, and I am not involved in setting or executing SBA policy.

19          My interactions with the White House regarding the Administrator's travel mostly  
20          involved compiling a list of the Administrator's completed and upcoming travel each  
21          week, which I emailed to the SBA's White House liaison who then emailed the report to  
22          the White House Office of Cabinet Affairs. Individuals at the White House Office of  
23          Cabinet Affairs would occasionally reach out directly to me with a logistical question  
24          about the information in the report.

25          I have never discussed the Administrator's or SBA's travel with Jeff Zients, the

1 White House chief of staff, and I am personally not aware of the White House directing  
2 the travel of the SBA, including the Administrator. In fact, it is my understanding that  
3 the Administrator is responsible for determining her own meeting and travel schedule.  
4 It is her job to meet with small businesses, explain what we do, and how our work and  
5 policies benefit their businesses and communities. She travels to promote the SBA and  
6 its policies, and her goal is to travel to all 50 States, visiting with small business owners of  
7 all backgrounds.

8 In my work at the SBA, I have not seen the Administrator or anyone else at the  
9 SBA use official time or resources to campaign for President Joe Biden or anyone else. I  
10 am also not involved in scheduling or supporting any nonofficial travel or activities of the  
11 Administrator.

12 Second, I want to clarify that I have no role in the SBA's Memorandum of  
13 Understanding with the State of Michigan, which I understand is of interest to the  
14 committee. I am not familiar with the MOU. I do not know how it came about or what  
15 it involves. My only memory of any discussion about it was a mention during a meeting  
16 about the press release announcing the MOU. In sum, I don't have any information  
17 about the MOU to share with you.

18 Third, I want to address the video that was posted online by the O'Keefe  
19 Media Group. I believe this video is the reason that the committee has asked to speak  
20 with me.

21 In March 2024, I was contacted on a dating app by a person who identified herself  
22 as Grace. We ended up meeting twice over drinks and dinner on what I believed to be  
23 personal dates. Grace, which may not be her real name, represented herself as an  
24 ardent Democrat who was concerned that President Biden would not win reelection and  
25 questioned me repeatedly about what the SBA was doing to help him.

1 I know now that she was lying to me and that she was recording me without my  
2 knowledge or consent. I first learned of the secret recording when it was posted to the  
3 internet. I have never seen the unedited footage of our two dates, but it is clear from  
4 watching the video that someone has clipped and selectively reordered statements to fit  
5 their false narrative about the SBA.

6 Watching the video is embarrassing. It is painful to see myself trying to impress  
7 a date, only to learn, along with the rest of the world, that she was lying and tricking me  
8 all along. It is also uncomfortable to admit that in trying to impress my date, I  
9 overstated my role with the SBA, as well as my knowledge of the workings of the  
10 White House. I have no personal knowledge of how decisions are made in the  
11 White House and who is involved.

12 And in trying to make my date feel less anxious about the November election, I  
13 found myself agreeing with misstatements that she made and making misstatements  
14 myself. The result is a selectively edited, misleading video.

15 In the video, I agree to and say things that are not accurate and do not reflect the  
16 agency's true nature, true work, or priorities.

17 I am personally responsible -- or sorry -- personally sorry for any confusion or  
18 misunderstanding that this has caused about the SBA or Administrator Guzman.

19 I have also been personally hurt by the social media backlash. With my name  
20 being public, people have found my public profiles and attacked me, requiring me to  
21 suspend social media accounts to ensure my safety.

22 I hope that my testimony today helps correct any false impressions that the  
23 committee may have gotten from this doctored and dishonest video.

24 Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

25 Ms. Holmes. Thank you, Mr. Robinson.

1 The time is now 10:15, and the majority will begin their first hour of questions.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MS. HOLMES:

4 Q How long have you worked at the SBA in any capacity?

5 A I started on May 31st, 2022, is my best recollection as the start date.

6 Q Where did you work prior to the SBA?

7 A I worked for the Biden for President campaign.

8 Q Do you remember what timeframe that was?

9 A I believe I started in August 2020 and ended in December 2020.

10 Q Okay. And where did you work before that?

11 A I worked for the Kamala Harris for President campaign.

12 Q Okay. Do you remember the dates of that one?

13 A As best of my recollection, it was starting in May 2019 and ending in  
14 December 2019.

15 Q Okay. Did you have any political jobs before that?

16 A Yes.

17 Q Do you recall?

18 A Yes. During the fall of 2018, I worked for the Iowa Democratic Party.

19 Q Okay.

20 A And during the 2016 election, I worked for Governor Roy -- or Attorney  
21 General Roy Cooper's first gubernatorial campaign.

22 Q Okay.

23 A And in 2014, I worked for the North Carolina Democratic Party.

24 Q Okay. Where did you work in 2012?

25 A 2012, I was in college. I volunteered briefly for the Obama campaign.

1 Q Okay. You said you were in the Biden for President campaign. What was  
2 your role there?

3 A My role was, in North Carolina, as regional political director.

4 Q Okay. What did that look like? Like, what were your responsibilities?

5 A I was in charge of the western half of the State, coordinating outreach to  
6 elected officials and candidates from the State.

7 Q Okay. Did any of that work sort of build up to where you got your eventual  
8 role at SBA -- coordinating, scheduling, those sorts of things?

9 A I can't say for sure why the SBA hired me, but I believe so.

10 Q What made you want to go to the SBA?

11 A The SBA has -- does amazing work and has a great mission of helping small  
12 business owners from across America, and as someone who has worked in small  
13 businesses, I understand the struggles they face and how important they are to the  
14 community. So I thought it would be very rewarding work.

15 Q You said you had experience in small businesses?

16 A Correct.

17 Q Was that from restaurants -- or what sort of small businesses did you work  
18 in?

19 A In high school and then later sometimes in between in college, I would work  
20 for a car dealership, delivering parts as a parts driver. And then in college and prior to  
21 myself returning to college, I did work at restaurants.

22 Q That's always a hard job.

23 Have any of the supervisors you've had on any of the campaigns we just walked  
24 through come over with you at the SBA? Do you work with any of them now?

25 A No.

1 Q Okay. For the first role at SBA -- you said that started in May of  
2 2022 -- what was that role?

3 A I believe it was in May 2022 --

4 Q Okay.

5 A -- was the official start date. It was special assistant to the Administrator.

6 Q Okay. So the same title you had at the time of the video?

7 A No.

8 Q Oh. Okay. Can you walk me through your titles at SBA?

9 A Yes. For the first around year and a half, my title was special assistant to  
10 the Administrator. Late last fall, I was promoted to special advisor to the  
11 Administrator.

12 Q For your special assistant role first, what were your day-to-day  
13 responsibilities?

14 A My main responsibility, as I mentioned in the statement, was compiling her  
15 daily briefing book. And then I also served for a time as an interim director of  
16 scheduling until we hired someone for that position.

17 Q Okay.

18 A And then the rest of the role is providing administrative and operational  
19 support for the Administrator and the front office.

20 Q And so that was things that you talked about in your statement -- scheduling,  
21 briefing books, things of that nature?

22 A Yes. Logistical arrangements for the Administrator.

23 Q Okay. And then you were promoted in the fall of 2022 -- or '23?

24 A Correct.

25 Q '23? Okay. And how did your role change with that promotion?

1           A    I continued to do the roles assigned as the special assistant, minus some of  
2 the minor logistical details and operational things.  And then I assisted more in the work  
3 of the Office of Public Engagement.

4           Q    And what did that work look like?

5           A    That work generally involved helping organize and plan and execute events  
6 for the Administrator with external partners.

7           Q    What kind of external partners?

8           A    Trade organizations, interest groups, small businesses.

9           Q    Does that include like resource partners like SBDCs?

10          A    Correct, yes.

11          Q    Okay.  Any nonprofits?

12          A    There are businesses, but I do not know if they're labeled nonprofit or not.

13          Q    That's okay.  So what is your current role at the SBA?

14          A    My current role is providing communications and public affairs strategy to  
15 the Office of Disaster Recovery and Resiliency.

16          Q    Okay.  When did that change happen?

17          A    That change started the beginning of May 2024.

18          Q    And why did you make that switch?

19          A    Earlier in 2024, around January or February, I had requested to be able to  
20 take part in more of the SBA's program activities and offices.

21          Q    Okay.

22          A    And I had expressed interest in two offices, one being ODR&R.  And around  
23 April, as I understand it, the associate administrator requested assistance and more staff,  
24 and I was internally detailed.

25          Q    The associate administrator for OSC?

1 A For ODR&R.

2 Q Oh, for ODRR. Okay.

3 And so then you made that transition in May?

4 A Correct.

5 Q Okay. Do you still meet with the Administrator, provide any assistance to  
6 her?

7 A I do not.

8 Q In the video you mentioned that you worked for the chief of staff. Who  
9 were you talking about?

10 A I was referring to the chief of staff of the SBA, Arthur Plews.

11 Q Okay. So did you work directly for him at the time?

12 A At the time of the video, yes. At other times throughout my tenure, I did  
13 not.

14 Q When did you work for him?

15 A As far as I remember, he was my direct superior when I started at the SBA.

16 Q Okay.

17 A And then when they hired the director of scheduling and advance, I was  
18 moved to their jurisdiction.

19 Q Okay.

20 A And then she left that role, and I went back to Arthur. And then I am now  
21 under Francisco Sanchez.

22 Q Okay. You said you worked on scheduling events for the Administrator in  
23 both of your roles, I guess, to some extent. When you were the -- in your first role for  
24 the Administrator in scheduling, did you receive requests and bring those up to the  
25 Administrator, or how did her scheduling process go?



1           A    Yes, we received requests from outside organizations through an email  
2    account.

3           Q    Okay.  Was it your email account or was there a separate box for events?

4           A    It is a separate inbox.

5           Q    A separate inbox.  Okay.

6                Did requests ever come directly to your inbox?

7           A    Occasionally.

8           Q    Okay.  And that's just because people got confused or didn't know who to  
9    send it to?

10           Ms. Grooms.  If you know.

11                BY MS. HOLMES:

12           Q    If you know.

13           A    Yeah, I'm not sure.

14           Q    Okay.  What kind of events were people reaching out to schedule?

15           A    The Administrator receives various invites from trade organizations,  
16    nonprofit groups, individuals, small business owners, for her to speak or attend events.

17           Q    How do you decide which ones get escalated up to her?

18           A    We meet as a team, and the first priority -- or first criteria is, for the date  
19    of -- is the Administrator available for the date required, and if not, is there any room  
20    to -- wiggle room.  The second criteria is, is this event going to be at the Administrator's  
21    level.  And then finally, we consider the priorities of the SBA and the Administrator at  
22    that time and if the event matches those priorities or what we are trying to promote.

23           Q    Okay.  For deciding if it's at the Administrator level or not, what are the  
24    criteria for that?

25           A    There's no official criteria.  That's just something that is a feel.

- 1 Q Okay. And, like, the team decides kind of as a group?
- 2 A Correct.
- 3 Q Okay. Who was on that team, to the best of your recollection?
- 4 A The chief of staff --
- 5 Q Okay.
- 6 A -- the deputy chief of staff, myself, the director of advance, the director of
- 7 scheduling, the associate administrator of the Office of Congressional and Legislative
- 8 Affairs, the associate administrator of the Office of Field Operations, the associate
- 9 administrator of the Office of Communications and Public Liaison, the counselor to the
- 10 Administrator, and various members of the public engagement team.
- 11 Q Was that done in person, on Zoom, both?
- 12 A Both.
- 13 Q Both. The Office of Field Operations' associate administrator, who was that
- 14 at the time?
- 15 A It is Jennifer Kim.
- 16 Q Still Jennifer Kim. And she was at the time when you worked in this role?
- 17 A Correct.
- 18 Q Okay. For the policies and procedures for establishing those three criteria
- 19 you outlined, is that something that's written down or is that something someone just
- 20 verbally says, hey, this is how we decide on events?
- 21 A That is how I would characterize it.
- 22 Q Okay.
- 23 A It is not written down --
- 24 Q Okay.
- 25 A -- and never been explained to me.

1 Q Okay. So how did you learn how to categorize events?

2 A Just through years of work in public engagement and event management  
3 roles.

4 Q Okay. In the third criteria you outlined, you mentioned the priorities of the  
5 SBA and the Administrator. How did you determine what priorities were?

6 A They mainly involve around what the SBA is working on at the moment.

7 Q Okay.

8 A They also involve around special months to highlight the achievement of  
9 certain demographics.

10 Q When you say certain demographics, who are you talking about?

11 A For instance, Black History Month, we like to highlight the work of  
12 African-American business owners. Same thing for the other heritage and history  
13 months.

14 Q Okay. How often did the Administrator travel?

15 A It varies week to week.

16 Q Would you say she travels on a weekly basis, once a month, twice a month,  
17 five events a week?

18 A I would say, in general, she takes one trip a week.

19 Q Okay. Did you ever go with her on those trips?

20 A I have.

21 Q Did you go on most of them, some of them, not many?

22 A I went on a minority of trips as the advance staff.

23 Q Okay. And what does advance staff do?

24 A The advance staff arrives the day before the events, along with the security  
25 detail, and they walk through the events that will be happening the next day, just to make

1 sure the logistics, the people we are visiting with understand what will happen and things  
2 of that nature, just prepping for the day.

3 And then the day of the event, you walk and guide the Administrator through the  
4 events, jumping from place to place, once again, just making sure everything's okay.

5 Q Okay. Are there events that you helped plan that didn't include the  
6 Administrator? Would you ever do advance for like the deputy administrator or other  
7 associate administrators?

8 A I did not.

9 Q Okay. How often do you meet with the Administrator, daily -- or did you, at  
10 the time?

11 A For individual meetings, we had no set schedule.

12 Q No set schedule. Okay.

13 On average, how often would you say you met with her?

14 A For a meeting, once a week.

15 Q Once a week.

16 Okay. And then you said you did her daily briefing books, and those included  
17 events, upcoming, and other meetings she had throughout the day, right?

18 A Correct.

19 Q When you wrote those, did you have any discretion over what was on her  
20 calendar or was that dictated down to you?

21 A I did not decide the calendar. I was just putting into the book what  
22 the -- what her calendar for the day was.

23 Q Okay. And then you just dropped it off in her office or sent it to her via  
24 email?

25 A Correct.

1 Q Which one? Sorry.

2 A Both.

3 Q Both. Okay.

4 When you worked under Mr. Plews, how often did you meet with him, on  
5 average?

6 A Once every 2 weeks we had our one-on-one.

7 Q One-on-one. Okay.

8 Did you bring him the Administrator's schedule or was that just a separate role?

9 A I had no responsibilities bringing Arthur a schedule or anything else.

10 Q Okay. What did you do for Mr. Plews?

11 A He was just my direct superior, so he was the person I reported to for time  
12 off, things of that nature.

13 Q Okay. Did he have authority to dictate what your day looked like or what  
14 meetings you would take?

15 A Yes.

16 Q Okay. In your role, did you oversee any other staff?

17 A No.

18 Q Okay. During your time with the SBA, in any of your roles, did you ever  
19 interact or work with a person named Jessica Reeves who's the director of public  
20 engagement?

21 A Yes.

22 Q Okay. What was your interaction like with her?

23 A Mainly, my interactions would be asking for briefing material for the events  
24 that the Office of Public Engagement were running.

25 Q Was that via email? On the phone?

1 A All the -- via email, Teams, and in person.

2 Q Okay. Did Ms. Reeves have any discretion over what went on the  
3 Administrator's calendar?

4 Ms. Grooms. If you know.

5 Mr. Robinson. No, not that I'm aware.

6 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

7 Ms. Meers. Can we take a pause? I'm not sure he can speak to his duties at  
8 other -- at the agency.

9 Ms. Holmes. It's just to the best of his knowledge.

10 Ms. Meers. Yeah, because he's not --

11 Ms. Holmes. He's not them, yeah.

12 Ms. Meers. -- he's not them. He's not her supervisor. He's not --

13 Ms. Holmes. He controlled the schedule, so I think he would have an idea of  
14 who sent him things to put on the schedule.

15 Ms. Grooms. Just for the record, he did not control the schedule, though.

16 Ms. Holmes. Yeah, you're right. That was an unfair characterization that we  
17 can strike down.

18 BY MS. HOLMES:

19 Q All right. To the best of your recollection, when you received calendar  
20 invites, you went into these meetings with the full team, and then the full team said, this  
21 is what goes on her calendar, this is what does not. How often did that full team meet?

22 A I would not say this is what goes on her calendar. We simply made a  
23 recommendation to the Administrator, and she decided which events we approved or  
24 declined for.

25 Q Okay.

1           A    That team met once a week.

2           Q    Once a week.

3                   Were there any events that came up in between the weeks that were maybe next  
4 day or more immediate that the Administrator would have to make a determination on in  
5 real time?

6           A    I do not recall.

7           Q    Okay.  If you got an email about an event that was maybe perhaps right  
8 after your weekly meeting, what would you do with that, if it was in the next few days?

9           A    As far as I can recall, most of the time, we would have to decline because we  
10 could not prepare the Administrator or vet the event in enough time.  There are times  
11 when we would reach back out and ask if this can be moved to a later date.

12          Q    Okay.

13          A    And by "we," I mean the director of scheduling.  I would not make that  
14 contact.

15          Q    Okay.  For these events like you just mentioned, they probably take a  
16 decent amount of time to plan.  What was your involvement like with the planning  
17 process for the events?  I know you said you did day before sometimes, but from the  
18 time the event got put on the calendar to the time that the event was executed and  
19 finalized, what was your role?

20          A    For the vast majority of events I had no role in actually planning the event or  
21 the content of the event.  My main role was just assigning who was responsible for the  
22 briefing material for the event and collecting that material.

23          Q    And when you say who's responsible for the briefing material, do you mean  
24 offices or individuals?

25          A    Both.

1 Q Okay.

2 A Sometimes it is assigned to an office, sometimes to a certain individual.

3 Q Okay. How did you make those determinations of who was getting what  
4 assignments?

5 A The nature of what the event was focusing on.

6 Q Can you give me an example?

7 A This is just not a factual event that happened --

8 Q Okay.

9 A -- but just an example. If the event focused on government contracting,  
10 someone from the Office of Government Contracting and Business Development would  
11 be assigned the memo.

12 Q And then they transmit it back to you for you to put in the briefing book,  
13 or where does it go from there?

14 A Once the memo is written and approved by that office, it was sent to me to  
15 put into the briefing book.

16 Q Okay. Were events different if they were SBA-sponsored events versus an  
17 event that you did with like an SBDC locally, or was it all -- the prep work all the same?

18 A Define -- yeah, define "different."

19 Q So in preparing for, like, just an SBA-sponsored event versus preparing for a  
20 SBA-sponsored event with a resource partner or a third party.

21 A No. The event -- or the general procedure, as I understand it, was not  
22 different.

23 Q Okay. Did you have any role in advertising these events to small  
24 businesses?

25 A No.



1 Q Okay. Do you happen to know how small businesses can find out about  
2 these events?

3 A I do not.

4 Q So I want to ask a few questions about mixed travel. Are you aware of  
5 what mixed travel is under the Hatch Act?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Okay. How are you aware of that?

8 A I am aware that the Administrator, as I understand it, is allowed to do  
9 political activity, but the SBA is not allowed to pay for or use any SBA resources during  
10 that activity.

11 Q So did you ever help with events that would eventually become mixed travel,  
12 like, did you do the first event -- I know sometimes they do an official event and then a  
13 political event. I think that's how the OSC defines "mixed travel." So were you ever  
14 involved in events that also had a political aspect to it?

15 A I was not, as far as I'm aware.

16 Q Okay. Did you --

17 Ms. Grooms. Can we just take a moment?

18 [Discussion off the record.]

19 Mr. Robinson. And to add, I don't know the Administrator's political travel or  
20 activities. I was never involved in any of those.

21 BY MS. HOLMES:

22 Q Those are kept separate, right?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Okay. Are you trained under the Hatch Act when you become part of the  
25 SBA, on what's allowed and what's not?

1 A Yes, we receive guidance from our Office of General Counsel.

2 Q How is that guidance transmitted to you?

3 A We are regularly given briefings on what is allowed and what is not allowed.

4 Q By regularly, do you mean annually, biannually?

5 A To the best of my recollection, it is twice a year.

6 Q Are you required to go to those?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Did you attend them?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Do you remember when your last one was?

11 A The last one, as far as I can remember, was I believe earlier this year. It  
12 might've been late last year.

13 Q Okay. You said you didn't remember or, to the best of your recollection,  
14 did not work on any events that had any mixed travel. Is that right?

15 A Correct. To the best of my recollection, I had no involvement.

16 Q Were you given any training on if those events would've occurred, how you  
17 were supposed to handle things?

18 A As far as I remember, I was not.

19 Q Okay. Okay. All right. I think we're going to turn to the video now  
20 which, as we discussed beforehand, was the kind of onus of bringing you in here today.  
21 I know you mentioned in your statement that it was a secret recording that you were  
22 unaware of at the time and that it was spliced.

23 So I think for the purposes of setting the base here, could you characterize what  
24 you believe to be incorrect about the video? You said you made statements of misfact.  
25 Could you just correct for the record what you said was a misstatement of fact in the

1 video that is something you are holding today as not true?

2 A Yes. There are quite a few statements --

3 Q Okay.

4 A -- I made in the video. Is -- I can't -- yeah.

5 [Discussion off the record.]

6 Mr. Robinson. So as far as I can remember, in the video -- let's see.

7 [Discussion off the record.]

8 Mr. Robinson. Let me see here. In the video, you know, I overstated my role  
9 with the SBA and my knowledge of the workings with the White House. In the video I  
10 referred to how decisions are made in the White House, and I have no direct knowledge  
11 of how those decisions were made. In the video I also state the White House directs the  
12 SBA and the Administrator to travel to certain States. That is not true. I have never  
13 heard or seen, as far as I can remember, the White House direct travel to any States, nor  
14 have I heard or seen, to the best of my recollection, the White House direct who to invite  
15 to any given event. And --

16 BY MS. HOLMES:

17 Q So to clarify that one real quick, you never saw an email come in from the  
18 White House requesting the Administrator at an event?

19 A I have received email invitations from the White House, but never have I  
20 received or seen, as far as I can remember, a directive that the Administrator attend an  
21 event.

22 Q Okay. So when an email came from the White House, was that something  
23 you just considered the same level as coming from a trade group or was that something  
24 that was considered as a higher priority?

25 A I believe it was something that we considered at the same level and if we

1 were available.

2 Q Yeah. Okay. Sorry. You can -- if there's other things you wanted to  
3 dispute.

4 I know we have that all on the record at the beginning too, but I didn't know if  
5 there was any specific statements you wanted to refute on top of what you put in your  
6 initial statement.

7 A I would say, in the video I mentioned travel to Montana.

8 Q Okay.

9 A The White House never directed any travel to Montana.

10 They never, as far as I can remember, as far as I've seen, directed who to invite to  
11 any event or who not to invite.

12 Q Okay. For Montana, did you ever get an email invitation from the  
13 White House for Montana? I know you said they didn't direct it, but was there ever an  
14 invitation to go to Montana?

15 A No, not as far as I can recall.

16 Q Okay. Were there any other statements you wanted to refute at the top?

17 A Without seeing a transcript, I can't recall what is --

18 Q Yeah.

19 A -- said in the video.

20 Q No, that's okay. We're going to walk through a couple of the quotations  
21 from the video as well, but I wanted to just give you the opportunity at the beginning to  
22 dispute.

23 So the video that we've been discussing on the record is the April 17th video  
24 released by James O'Keefe, containing footage of you and some allegations.

25 You said you became aware of this video on Twitter. Is that right?

1           A    The evening the video was posted, I received a call from our chief of staff  
2 notifying me that the video was made public.

3           Q    Okay.  What was your reaction to that?

4           A    In general, I would say shock and embarrassment.

5           Q    Did anyone else at the SBA reach out to you to talk about it?

6           A    Yes.

7           Q    Can you let us know who?

8           A    Mike Rodriguez -- Michael Rodriguez, the head of the Administrator's  
9 security detail --

10          Q    Okay.

11          A    -- called to talk about the video and get background, as a security measure.  
12 And the associate administrator for the Office of Congressional and Public Liaisons, we  
13 talked about the video -- or the video being the subject of an invitation I received for a  
14 transcribed interview from this committee.

15          Q    Okay.  And I think you mentioned in your statement that, for security  
16 purposes, you took down your social media and things of that nature.  Was that -- sorry.

17          A    You can finish the question.  I'm sorry.

18          Q    Was that something that Mr. Rodriguez directed you to do or was that just  
19 something you thought would be for your own personal safety?

20          A    I was never directed to do that.  It was for my own personal well-being.

21          Q    Okay.  As I'm sure you are aware, the committee condemns any acts  
22 against you as a result of this video or as a result of this transcribed interview.  We do  
23 not condone any action taken against you because of this, so just wanted to get that on  
24 the record.

25                Are you the individual in the video?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Okay. So throughout the video, you name a number of individuals. Now,  
3 Ron Klain was one you mentioned in your opening statement as someone you hadn't  
4 really worked with. Can you describe the nature of your interactions with Ron Klain?

5 A I have never had any interactions with Ron Klain.

6 Q Okay. What about Steve Ricchetti?

7 A I have never had any interactions with Mr. Ricchetti.

8 Q Anita Dunn?

9 A I have met Anita Dunn once and shook her hand, and that's the extent of my  
10 interactions with Anita.

11 Q Was that just like at an SBA event or something?

12 A Yes.

13 Q Okay. Gene Sperling?

14 A I have never met Mr. Sperling or had any interactions with him.

15 Q And Jeff Zients?

16 A The same. I have never met or had any interactions with Mr. Zients.

17 Q You said you worked with the SBA White House liaison, right?

18 A Yes.

19 Q Okay. What were your interactions with them about?

20 A My interaction with the White House liaison was compiling a list of the  
21 Administrator's previous travel for the week and then her upcoming travel, and I would  
22 email that to the White House liaison.

23 Q For the record, who is that?

24 A Destine Hicks Lundy.

25 Q Is she employed by the SBA or the White House?

1           A    She is employed by the SBA, as far as I know.

2           Q    Okay.  In the video, you stated that the Administrator is the most traveled  
3 member of the Cabinet, quote, like pretty much every week.  Do you still agree with --

4           Ms. Grooms.  I'm sorry.  If we're going to use video clips, I think now would be a  
5 good time to have a conversation about the video itself.

6           Ms. Holmes.  Okay.  Can we go off the record for a minute?

7           [Discussion off the record.]

8           Ms. Holmes.  We can go back on the record and you can state your objection.

9           Ms. Grooms.  Yeah.  So our objection is to the fact that the -- so obviously he  
10 was recorded without his consent over a period of many hours on a series of two  
11 different dates.  The video itself is cut and pasted together in a intentional way to make  
12 an argument that is misleading but also just not helpful to context.

13           And so asking him questions about the video out of context, we think, is only  
14 really furthering the misleading nature of the video itself.

15           If you have a copy of the video, which I understand you don't have the full video,  
16 we'd be happy to watch and discuss the full video with you and then be able to  
17 understand what actually occurred in context.

18           But we have concerns about sort of quoting from the video and asking about sort  
19 of specific lines from the video.

20           But he is happy to talk about what he understands to be things that actually do  
21 occur at the SBA and actually have occurred at the SBA, and his work at the SBA.  He has  
22 already explicitly stated that he made many misstatements on the video.  He listed out  
23 some.  I think it's fair to say there are others that he feels he misstated or would not  
24 have stated if not for trying to impress a date, and are not accurate to the way that the  
25 SBA works and the sort of functions of the SBA.  And we're happy to come back to you

1 with like a longer list of that, if that is helpful, and certainly happy to have him answer  
2 questions about what actually does occur at the SBA.

3 I think the video itself, though, is hard to discuss in sort of spliced-out detail.

4 Ms. Holmes. And your objection is noted. I would just note that it's actually  
5 not a valid objection under the House rules or the committee rules, unless you have a  
6 specific privilege you're trying to invoke over the video.

7 Ms. Grooms. So the video is out of context and misleading. So in the rules of  
8 evidence, there would be, you know, a rule of completeness. Obviously, the rules of  
9 evidence don't occur to actually apply here, but the principles behind them are the same,  
10 the idea being that, you know, the information that you would get from this is not  
11 complete without more information, which you don't have, right, because whoever put  
12 out this video intentionally put it out without the full context of the many hours of this  
13 date.

14 If you're going to sort of insist upon asking him questions about the video, I think  
15 our request is that you show him at least clips of the video that you're showing so that he  
16 can sort of see it in context, and we will see what he is able to remember about the video.

17 But what I'm saying is, you know, he has acknowledged that it was incredibly  
18 embarrassing to him. He has acknowledged that he said things that were just wrong,  
19 and he said things to just make his date, you know, happy, and that she was aggressively  
20 pressing, as you can sort of see in the video, she was aggressively pressing and he said  
21 things to sort of move the conversation along.

22 And I think to the extent that there are things about the SBA that is different than,  
23 or things that you're interested in, I think all of those things were misstatements, right?

24 Like, essentially all of the things that the committee has expressed interest in  
25 investigating related to the SBA are things that are not related to how he actually



1 understands the SBA to have worked, so --

2 Ms. Holmes. Okay. So, again, like I mentioned, we don't follow the rules of  
3 evidence, and we did say that -- agreed to the scope that the video was going to be part  
4 of the scope in this conversation.

5 I understand that you have already made what you feel is a statement. You are  
6 free to answer questions or not, but absent an actual assertion of privilege or something  
7 that is recognized under the House rules or the committee rules, we do intend to proceed  
8 with questions.

9 Now, I will remind you that you are here voluntarily, and you do not have to  
10 answer these questions. However, you do still have a subpoena that we could bring you  
11 back and have you testify at a deposition instead to answer these questions. Because  
12 while, you know, I understand that dating is hard in this city -- we've all been there, it's a  
13 horrible world out there -- it is within our duty under the Constitution to investigate  
14 allegations made about the SBA and to have you come in and correct the record and  
15 provide context.

16 You are free to provide as much context to these statements that you want. In  
17 the interest of reducing embarrassment, I was not going to play the video. I was just  
18 going to say things. However, if you believe that the video being played would be  
19 helpful for you in remembering, we can go that route, or we can do what I said was the  
20 raw transcript that we typed up based off of the video.

21 If you want to confer with your counsel, that's fine. We can go off the record for  
22 a second so you guys can chat.

23 Ms. Grooms. Yeah.

24 [Discussion off the record.]

25 Ms. Grooms. Let's go back on the record.

1           To be clear, Mr. Robinson did not make any allegations on the video. He just said  
2 things, whether they were -- and he said many of them weren't accurate.

3           I think the preference is just if you could play the part of the video you're asking  
4 about, and then he will try to assist you in providing more context to that.

5           Ms. Holmes. Okay. And if you want to just talk about general ideas that were  
6 discussed, like, we can start there. And then if we have more specific questions, we can  
7 go into the video, because I do not want to subject your client to unnecessary emotional  
8 harm.

9           Ms. Grooms. Appreciate that.

10           BY MS. HOLMES:

11           Q    So let's just start with, you said the Administrator travels about once a week,  
12 right --

13           A    Correct.

14           Q    -- on average?

15           Do you think that makes her one of the more traveled members of the Cabinet?

16           Whether or not it's the most traveled or least traveled, do you think that she travels more  
17 than the average Cabinet member?

18           A    Yes. That statement that I made in the video that she was the most  
19 traveled member was through rumor mill. I do not have the exact numbers of how  
20 much each Cabinet member travels.

21           As far as I can recall, it was through discussing the travel of other Cabinet  
22 members with other staffers that we made the assumption that she was the most  
23 traveled. So that's -- I do not know if that is a factual statement or not.

24           Q    Okay. You said you traveled with her a minority of the time. So about  
25 how many trips did you travel per week or per month with the Administrator?

1           A    As to my best knowledge, during my entire tenure at the SBA so far, I have  
2 done less than 10 trips with the Administrator.

3           Q    Okay. Did you ever travel with the deputy administrator?

4           A    No.

5           Q    Okay.

6           [Discussion off the record.]

7                   BY MS. HOLMES:

8           Q    You said the Administrator gets to decide where and when she travels. Is  
9 that right?

10          A    Yes.

11          Q    And does she decide what staff come with her?

12          A    I do not know the process of assigning staff.

13          Q    Do you know who assigned you to trips?

14          A    I was assigned by the -- for every trip I took, I was assigned by the director of  
15 advance to advance those trips.

16          Q    So all the trips you did was just advance?

17          A    Correct.

18          Q    Okay. You didn't do any logistical support at the event?

19          A    No, they were just as an advance role.

20          Q    In the video you responded "yeah" to the question of whether  
21 Administrator Guzman said she's basically campaigning for President Biden in critical  
22 battleground States.

23                You mentioned in your statement that that was not something you agree with  
24 today. Is that true?

25                Ms. Grooms. I think that was a little confusing.

1 Ms. Holmes. Too specific? Okay.

2 Ms. Grooms. It was, frankly, just confusing. Do you want to rephrase? Sorry.

3 Ms. Holmes. Yeah.

4 Administrator Guzman said basically you're going to these critical battleground  
5 States.

6 You responded, yeah.

7 The undercover reporter says, to basically campaign for President Biden?

8 You respond, yeah.

9 I understand there might be some splicing and dicing in there, but do you  
10 remember making anything like that statement?

11 Ms. Meers. Can we take a pause? I heard you say "Administrator Guzman  
12 said," and --

13 Ms. Holmes. It was -- yeah, sorry. Open quote, Administrator Guzman said  
14 basically we are going to these critical battleground States. That was -- end quote.

15 Ms. Harrington. Who said that, Lauren?

16 Ms. Holmes. From the undercover reporter.

17 Ms. Harrington. So it was the unidentified person that said that?

18 Ms. Holmes. Yes, the undercover reporter. And then --

19 Ms. Meers. Clarify Administrator Guzman did not say --

20 Ms. Holmes. Correct. No, it was -- sorry.

21 An open quote from the journalist, Administrator Guzman said basically we're  
22 going to these critical battleground States, end quote, from the undercover reporter.

23 Then Mr. Robinson responds, quote, yeah, end quote.

24 The journalist finishes with, open quote, to basically campaign for President Biden,  
25 end quote.

1           And Mr. Robinson responds, quote, yeah, end quote.

2           Ms. Grooms.   Okay.   How about this, tell her, to the best of your recollection,  
3   do you ever remember Administrator Guzman ever saying anything to the effect of, we  
4   need to travel to battleground States?

5           Mr. Robinson.   Yes.   The quotes on the video are accurate, and that is correct, I  
6   never heard the Administrator express the need to travel to any State for a particular  
7   reason.

8           Ms. Grooms.   I'm sorry.   That was slightly confusing.

9           Mr. Robinson.   Oh.

10          Ms. Grooms.   My question to you was, did you ever hear Administrator Guzman  
11   say --

12          Mr. Robinson.   No, she -- the Administrator never said those words quoted in the  
13   video.

14          Ms. Grooms.   And so is that an example of one of the misstatements that you  
15   made?

16          Mr. Robinson.   Correct, yes.

17          Ms. Holmes.   Okay.   And that was just to impress or move the person along at  
18   the date?

19          Mr. Robinson.   Yes.   I cannot say the exact reason I said something that was not  
20   factual.

21          Ms. Holmes.   Okay.   So if not from the Administrator herself, do you remember  
22   where you got the idea that the goal was to go to battleground States or why you would  
23   say anything to that nature?

24          Ms. Grooms.   Yeah.   So that's not exactly what he said even in the video.   So  
25   maybe if you could just explain, do you believe that the goal of the SBA is to travel to

1 battleground States?

2 Mr. Robinson. No. The goal of the SBA is not to travel battleground States.  
3 The political importance of a event -- or excuse me -- of a region is never, as far as I can  
4 recall, never considered as a reason to go -- to go to an event or say no to an event.

5 BY MS. HOLMES:

6 Q So when you were explaining how you decide what events to go to, in the  
7 third category you mentioned that it was whatever priorities of the SBA or the  
8 Administrator at the time. Her priorities have never been aligned with going to States  
9 where there are battlegrounds? That was never discussed at any of those meetings?

10 A No, I do not believe so.

11 Q Okay. To clarify that for the record, in all of the meetings about events and  
12 which ones you were selecting, the Administrator, or anyone in the room, never said that  
13 they were going to go to battleground States?

14 A To my best recollection.

15 Q Okay. To your recollection and/or knowledge, what are battleground  
16 States?

17 A I mean, this is my personal opinion --

18 Q Yes, yeah.

19 A -- on to what a battleground State is? A battleground State is a State that is  
20 important for any candidate in the Presidential election to win in order to go on and win  
21 the election.

22 Q Do you know what the battleground States are for this upcoming election?

23 A I have a general knowledge, but I actually do not know what are the  
24 confirmed battleground States of either campaign.

25 Q What do you generally think the battleground States are for the Democrat

1 campaign?

2 A Historically, they have been States like Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona, and  
3 North Carolina, and Georgia.

4 Q Did you ever go, in your travels with the Administrator, to any of those  
5 States you just named?

6 A Yes. I have been to Pennsylvania with the Administrator and I have been to  
7 Michigan with the Administrator.

8 Q Is that just one time each or how many?

9 A To my best recollection, it was just one time each.

10 Q One time each.

11 And that was for events?

12 A Correct. As an advance staff.

13 Q Do you remember the dates of those events -- or around the general time?

14 A The -- as far as I can remember, the Pennsylvania trip that I went on with the  
15 Administrator was earlier this year, I believe in March.

16 Q Okay.

17 A The trip to Michigan I believe was sometime in 2023. I have no clue the  
18 month.

19 Q Okay. That's okay.

20 Okay. So let's deal with the Pennsylvania one. You said earlier in March.

21 Other than the Administrator, who else was at that event?

22 A To my best knowledge, we had our press secretary, there was the digital  
23 media staffer --

24 Q Okay.

25 A -- and members of the security detail.

1

2 [11:03 a.m.]

3 BY MS. HOLMES:

4 Q Were there any representatives of the State there?

5 A No.

6 Q Were any Members of Congress there?

7 A No.

8 Q To the best of your recollection, what was the event about?

9 A The Administrator did multiple events that day. The first event was a small  
10 business visit and announcement of government funding to the City of Scranton, and the  
11 following number of events were all small business visits.

12 Q Okay. Who was at the announcement for Scranton?

13 Ms. Grooms. Could you be more specific? Do you mean from the SBA, or --

14 BY MS. HOLMES:

15 Q Who was participating in the event, whether they were State individuals,  
16 SBA individuals? Who spoke at the event? I don't need to know attendees, like, in the  
17 crowd.

18 A Part of the event was the Administrator, the mayor of Scranton, and the  
19 White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

20 Q And who is that?

21 A Tom Perez.

22 Q So those three were the ones that spoke, as far as you remember?

23 A As far as I know.

24 Q Okay. In your planning, do you remember why Scranton was chosen?

25 A I have no knowledge of why Scranton was chosen.



- 1 Q Okay. When was your meeting about this event? Do you remember?
- 2 A I do not.
- 3 Q Okay. Do you remember about how long it took to plan this one?
- 4 A As I can recall, unfortunately, those events were planned rapidly.
- 5 Q Okay.
- 6 A Within a week.
- 7 Q Okay. Why so fast, if you can remember?
- 8 A I have -- I believe it was just because we received the invitation on short
- 9 notice.
- 10 Q Okay. Did you receive the invitation either in your box or in that general
- 11 box that we talked about at the beginning?
- 12 A I am not sure how the invitation came in.
- 13 Q You're not sure or you don't remember?
- 14 A I am not sure.
- 15 Q Okay. When did you first hear about the event?
- 16 A As far as I can recall, it would have been after the event was confirmed.
- 17 Q Okay. So this wasn't one that you handled, for lack of a better term?
- 18 A Correct. I had no responsibility in planning this event.
- 19 Q You just did day before?
- 20 A Yes.
- 21 Q Okay. Were there often events you had no hand in planning?
- 22 A Due to the nature of my role, I had no -- generally, no input into events
- 23 unless, as I mentioned earlier, it was those few events I worked with public engagement.
- 24 Q Do you remember how many days heads-up you got that you were
- 25 traveling? Was it, like, day of that they were like, "Oh, hey, you need to go do the

1 day-before planning"? Was it just a couple days before?

2 A For my personal travel?

3 Q Yes. For you getting there.

4 A As far as I can remember, I was told probably 4 days ahead of time.

5 Q Four days? Okay.

6 And how did you travel? Do you pay for it or does SBA?

7 A The SBA pays for all of my work travel.

8 Q Okay. Do you have to keep logs or anything of what you spend?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Okay. What do those look like? What kind of information do you have to  
11 put on those when you travel on official travel?

12 A To my best recollection, it is the cost of travel, whether that's renting a car  
13 or traveling by air, the hotel fees, the per diem amounts, and if there is any additional  
14 fees. Like, sometimes we have to pay for parking at hotels or things of that nature.

15 Q So do you put those on your credit card and get reimbursed, or does the SBA  
16 have a direct expense account that they pay it through?

17 A I have a government credit card.

18 Q Okay. Do you still have that?

19 A Yes.

20 Q Okay. To the best of your recollection, at this event, did you speak with  
21 Mr. Perez?

22 A Yes. I spoke prior to the start of the event and each subsequent event just  
23 explaining the movements of the event.

24 Q Like, the schedule, the timeframe, things like that?

25 A Correct. It would have been "walk here" and that sort of thing.

- 1 Q Okay. To the best of your recollection, what other SBA staff were doing the  
2 advance with you?
- 3 A I was there with members of the security detail.
- 4 Q Just the security detail?
- 5 A Correct.
- 6 Q So Mr. Rodriguez?
- 7 A Mr. Rodriguez was not on that trip.
- 8 Q Okay. But his team?
- 9 A Yes.
- 10 Q Okay. You said you went to Michigan as well sometime in 2023?
- 11 A Correct.
- 12 Q Okay. What do you remember about that trip?
- 13 A As far as I remember, the main event and purpose for going was for a Small  
14 Business Digital Alliance event.
- 15 Q Okay.
- 16 A And then, following the SBDA event, the Administrator visited with two or  
17 three small businesses.
- 18 Q Did you go to those small businesses, too?
- 19 A Yes.
- 20 Q Do you know how those small businesses were chosen?
- 21 A As far as I know, in the general practices, it is -- the small businesses are  
22 chosen by the SBA district office.
- 23 Q Okay. For Michigan, who runs that office? Do you remember?
- 24 A I'm sorry. I can't remember her name.
- 25 Q That's okay.

1           Were there any Members at that one? Members of Congress -- excuse me -- at  
2 that event in Michigan?

3           A    I do not believe so.

4           Q    Okay. Were there any State officials?

5           A    To the best of my knowledge, no.

6           Q    Okay. And what did that event look like? You said there was something  
7 with the Small Business Digital Alliance. Was that a presentation? Was that a  
8 discussion, a meeting, or was it a public-facing event?

9           A    It was a fireside chat with a member of the organization that we were doing  
10 the event with. I cannot remember which partner organization was represented at that  
11 event.

12          Q    Okay. You mentioned in your opening statement that the stuff about  
13 Montana was untrue that you said in the video. Is that right?

14          A    Correct.

15          Q    Okay. And you said that you have no recollection and/or knowledge of the  
16 SBA going to Montana for political purposes?

17          A    Correct.

18          Q    Okay. Do you remember -- yeah, go ahead.

19          A    Just to clarify, the trip to Montana did happen.

20          Q    Okay.

21          A    The trip was not based on political reasoning. The trip was to highlight the  
22 work of Montanan small business owners during National Small Business Week.

23          Q    Okay. This year or last year?

24          A    The event was this year.

25          Q    This year. So small business week was in March?

1 A It was the end of April, beginning of May.

2 Q Okay. Okay. And you were not on that trip, though?

3 A I was not.

4 Q Okay.

5 Ms. Grooms. This is a room where we would definitely know when National  
6 Small Business Week is.

7 Ms. Holmes. I've had, like, 97 strokes since then.

8 BY MS. HOLMES:

9 Q So the trip occurred. Was the Administrator on that trip?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. To the best of your recollection, who else went from the SBA?

12 A I have no knowledge of who went on that trip other than the Administrator.

13 Q Okay. But you knew that it was to campaign for small businesses -- or to  
14 advocate for small businesses in Montana? I will strike "campaign." That was a  
15 Freudian slip.

16 A Correct. The main purpose of the event was to attend the national -- or  
17 Montana's National Small Business Week award winners.

18 Q Award winners. Okay.

19 How do you know that that was the purpose of the trip?

20 A That was the purpose of every trip we did that week, was visiting a State and  
21 the Administrator being present for their award ceremonies or to highlight those winners.

22 Q Okay. Within that week, how many other States are you aware of that she  
23 traveled to for that purpose?

24 A To my best knowledge, it was three other States.

25 Q Do you remember which ones they were?

1           A    The Administrator went to Wisconsin, Colorado, and then the other one, I  
2 cannot remember. It was a New England State.

3           Q    Okay. How did you know that the purpose -- how did you know what the  
4 purpose of these trips were? Did someone tell you? Was it an email? Did you put it  
5 in the briefing book?

6           A    I was part of the trip planning calls.

7           Q    Okay.

8           Ms. Harrington. Lauren, we have 1 hour.

9           Ms. Holmes. I have 2 minutes left according to my clock, but I will finish this line  
10 of questioning, and then we will take a break.

11          Ms. Harrington. Okay. And do we get the same at the end in ours?

12          Ms. Holmes. Yes. You can have your hour plus whatever it takes to finish your  
13 line of questioning, as I stated in the beginning. Thank you, Ellen.

14                   BY MS. HOLMES:

15          Q    So you said you were a part of the trip planning for those events specifically,  
16 or is that part of your role more generally sometimes?

17          A    In general, I tried to make at least one trip planning call just so I could  
18 correctly assign briefing material.

19          Q    Okay. So was that for all travel that she did?

20          A    Correct.

21          Q    Who was on those calls?

22          A    There are quite a few people on those calls.

23          Q    Okay.

24          A    In general, if it is a trip to a district, those calls are hosted by the district  
25 office, and then they include a good number of SBA staff from Headquarters.

1 Q Okay. Anyone else that you can remember?

2 A That's -- yeah, that's generally who was involved.

3 Ms. Holmes. Okay. We can go ahead and go off the record.

4 [Recess.]

5 Ms. Harrington. Hi, Tyler. I'm Ellen Harrington, the deputy staff director with  
6 the House Small Business Committee, and I want my colleague to take a minute to  
7 introduce herself to you.

8 Ms. Beca-Barragan. Hi, Tyler. I'm Renata Beca-Barragan, senior counsel for the  
9 Small Business Committee, minority side.

10 Ms. Harrington. Thank you for being here today. We appreciate it.

11 Is there anything that you would like to say to clarify from the previous hour?

12 Mr. Robinson. Yes. I just want to put on the record and note that, in the last  
13 hour, Ms. Holmes asked what my opinion -- or, in my opinion, what the battleground  
14 States were for this year and if I had traveled with the Administrator to any of those, and I  
15 said I had been to Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Just to add, I was on a trip to Atlanta,  
16 Georgia, with the Administrator. And that's it.

17 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

18 BY MS. HARRINGTON:

19

20 Q I first just want to start off by expressing some of the concerns we have with  
21 the video today. We have concerns with the use of this -- the reliance of this video. It  
22 was secretly reported by an unidentified person who targeted you through a dating app.  
23 Then, it was diced and spliced to try to infer wrongdoing with the administration.

24 We have concerns that this video was produced by James O'Keefe, the founder of  
25 Project Veritas, who was ousted from the organization in 2023 over allegations that he

1 mistreated workers and misspent organization funds. We also have concerns with some  
2 of his previous work. He had to settle a lawsuit resulting from the group's videos based  
3 on a Pennsylvania postal worker's allegations of election improprieties, and Mr. O'Keefe  
4 and the organization had to admit there was absolutely no wrongdoing and no voter  
5 fraud at this Erie post office.

6 Tyler, are you aware that Mr. O'Keefe profits off these malicious operations and  
7 reportedly pays swipers \$5,000 if they use the footage?

8 A Yes, I am aware of that.

9 Q Okay. So, again, we have concerns that the majority is relying on this  
10 online video manufactured by an individual whose credibility has been permanently and  
11 irreversibly damaged, and we're concerned that the majority is using taxpayer dollars to  
12 discuss this heavily altered video designed to imply wrongdoing.

13 So let me begin. I just want to summarize some of the statements that you  
14 made, so -- and I just want to make sure I fully understand your role at SBA.

15 In your role as a special advisor, you prepared the Administrator's briefing book  
16 and conducted research as necessary, but you did not make final decisions as to where  
17 the Administrator travels, who travels with the Administrator, and who gets invited to  
18 those events, correct?

19 A Correct.

20 Q Okay. To be clear, you do not have a decisionmaking authority, correct?

21 A Correct.

22 Q Okay. Okay. Understanding that you do not have this decisionmaking  
23 authority, what criteria do you and the scheduling team use in making travel  
24 recommendations?

25 A As I mentioned earlier, it is -- first, what is the Administrator's availability at



1 the requested time? Then it is if it is something that is at the Administrator's level.  
2 And then the final is if it aligns with the priorities and policies that the SBA is trying to  
3 promote at that moment.

4 Q Okay. So you've listed this criteria.

5 In your experience, has the scheduling team stated the need or desire to travel to  
6 a battleground State to campaign for the President, and is that a factor?

7 A No. I do not recall that ever being discussed, and I do not believe it is a  
8 factor.

9 Q Okay. Thank you very much, Tyler. I appreciate that.

10 I want to turn to this videotape, unfortunately. Could you tell us how it came  
11 about, if that's okay?

12 A Yes. In March 2024, I matched with someone on a dating app, and we  
13 began texting on that app and then on our cell phones. We arranged a date that took  
14 place about a week later.

15 On that date, we -- you know, it was around an hour. We talked about various  
16 things. I now know that she was not who she said she was and that she was recording  
17 both dates without my knowledge or consent.

18 And then, after the first date, we arranged a second one that took place -- kind of  
19 a similar timeframe -- 7 to 10 days later. And then --

20 Q How long was that date?

21 A It was also around an hour.

22 Q So about 120 minutes total of --

23 A Correct. A little over, probably.

24 Q Okay. Okay. And the video was 12 minutes?

25 A I believe the video is 18.

1 Q Okay. But in the terms where you're being -- without the editorial by  
2 James O'Keefe, it was 12 minutes, I believe. You may not know that.

3 A I do not know.

4 Q I did double-check that a couple times.

5 Okay. Do you recall the name of the person -- you said it was Grace?

6 A Correct. She told me her name was Grace.

7 Q Did she say where she was employed?

8 A She told me that she was a private tutor for high school students.

9 Q Do you think this is real, or do you think it's fake?

10 A I do not believe she is a private tutor for high school students anymore.

11 Q Okay. Okay. Okay. And how did she describe herself in these  
12 exchanges?

13 A I mean, she described her occupation, her family background. She  
14 did -- we did talk about politics and our interests outside the things we do.

15 Q Okay. And, based on your previous testimony -- I just want to be  
16 clear -- did you at any point go along with her statements or talk about things that you  
17 really don't know a whole lot about during these dates to impress her?

18 A Yes. During both dates, I said things that are untrue and that I have no  
19 knowledge of.

20 Q Okay. I assume this isn't easy for you to admit today, and I'm sure, though,  
21 you're not the first person and you're probably not the last that tried to impress someone  
22 on their date. So thank you for being forthcoming. We appreciate that.

23 I just want to follow up, if you don't mind. How and when did you find out about  
24 being secretly videotaped?

25 A The day the video was released, I was notified by our chief of staff that the

1 video was made public.

2 Q Okay. Okay. So you had two dates. They lasted roughly an hour each.  
3 Again, that's a total of 120 minutes-plus. And the videotape itself was -- your recordings  
4 were 10 to 12 minutes, is what I recorded it at.

5 So this was heavily edited and manipulated, correct?

6 A Yes, I believe so.

7 Q Okay. And do you feel your words were taken out of context?

8 A I feel some of them were, yes.

9 Q Okay. How has this video affected you professionally and personally?

10 A Personally, it is an embarrassment and something I deeply regret.

11 Professionally, it did cause -- it was hard for me to adjust at first after the video  
12 was released with some coworkers knowing and some not.

13 Q Okay. Okay. So, again, I haven't seen all the footage, and it sounds like  
14 you haven't seen the entire footage as well. Is that correct? I believe you said that.

15 A I've seen the 18-minute video. I have not -- never seen footage of both  
16 dates altogether.

17 Q Uh-huh. And we learned earlier today that the majority who called you  
18 here today hasn't even seen the full uncut video. So, again, we have concerns about this  
19 being entered into the record and being used in the investigation.

20 Just 1 minute.

21 Actually, I do want to go back. I'm sorry. I do want to go back and just go  
22 through some of the statements that were in the video.

23 From what I understand in your opening, you said this person portrayed herself as  
24 a very strong Democrat, and it sounded like she thought you weren't doing enough to get  
25 President Biden reelected. So there seems to be -- there are rules against the use of

1 official resources for political campaign purposes.

2 In your experience, does the Administrator use official resources for political  
3 campaign purposes?

4 A No. In my experience, the SBA has never used resources for campaigning  
5 for any person or cause.

6 Q Okay. Okay. And there was a little discussion earlier, and I just want to  
7 follow up.

8 Specifically, did you ever hear the Administrator say they are going to  
9 battleground States to basically campaign for President Biden?

10 A No. To the best of my recollection, she never said such things.

11 Q And those were the words of the unidentified woman, not yours?

12 A Yes, I believe so.

13 Q Okay. It appears you said, "Anytime we go and try to visit a Member of  
14 Congress, if they're a Democrat" -- and then you say, "So we're going to Montana because  
15 Senator Tester, and he's a Democratic Senator from Montana. He's in a tough election  
16 race. That's, like, a seat we need in the Senate to maintain the minority."

17 Did you hear Administrator Guzman make that statement?

18 A No. I, to the best of my knowledge, never heard Administrator Guzman  
19 make that statement.

20 Q Okay. Thank you.

21 It appears you said --

22 Ms. Grooms. If we're going to do -- I'm sorry.

23 Ms. Harrington. Okay.

24 Ms. Grooms. If we're going to do the video, if you could show him the video. I  
25 think that was a request of the majority. We have the same request here.

1 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Okay. Thank you. I will -- okay. That's fine.

2 So we've gone through a number of your statements. I had a couple more, but if  
3 you prefer, we don't use -- I don't have access to the video quickly. So why don't we go  
4 ahead and just move on from there, if that's okay.

5 Ms. Grooms. Yeah, that's fine. Or if you want to have him -- as I said to the  
6 majority, if you would like to ask him factual things about what occurs at the SBA, that's  
7 fine. If we just could avoid the statements -- the quoting from the record --

8 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Okay. So, I guess, under the Hatch Act, there are strict  
9 rules as to what the Administrator can and cannot do. And I guess I want to -- I'm  
10 referring back to the video where the narrator said "indirectly campaigning." The  
11 Administrator does not -- we'll scratch that statement. We'll scratch that.

12 Okay. I'm fine with questions. That's good.

13 Ms. Grooms. Okay. Can we have one moment?

14 Ms. Harrington. Yes.

15 [Discussion off the record.]

16 Ms. Grooms. If we could just go back on and we can just clarify something.

17 In the first round, Mr. Robinson, you described battleground States that you  
18 described, in your personal opinion, were battleground States and that the Administrator  
19 had traveled to, and I think you described which ones you had gone to. You tried to  
20 correct it in the second round.

21 Can you just clarify which of the States that, in your opinion -- personal  
22 opinion -- are battleground States that the Administrator has traveled to have you also  
23 traveled to?

24 Mr. Robinson. Yes. Of those States, I have traveled with the Administrator to  
25 Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Georgia.

1           Ms. Grooms. Uh-huh. And have you traveled with the Administrator to  
2 Wisconsin?

3           Mr. Robinson. No.

4           Ms. Grooms. Okay. Sorry. I'm not sure if that was unclear or not, but I heard  
5 it wrong. Okay. Thank you.

6           Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you.

7           Lauren, do you plan to go into another hour?

8           Ms. Holmes. Uh-huh.

9           Ms. Harrington. You do. Okay. We'll have some questions, then, for the next  
10 hour. We're okay. We're good.

11          [Recess.]

12          Ms. Holmes. We can go back on the record.

13                 I would just like to note at the top, in response to the minority's claims that we are  
14 not saying anything about the validity of the video or not, that we do have a constitutional  
15 duty to investigate any allegations made against and/or about the SBA because we are in  
16 charge of overseeing the SBA, and that is why we are here today.

17                 I think if the roles were flipped, the minority would be doing the same, and,  
18 honestly, they would be derelict in their duty if they did not investigate serious allegations  
19 such as these against the SBA. So --

20                 Ms. Sawyer. Can I just pause you there just for a moment? Because I just do  
21 want to make clear on the record that whatever allegations are being made or have been  
22 made are not coming from Mr. Robinson. You can ask him directly if he has any  
23 allegations, but he does not. I understand that you all may have allegations -- meaning  
24 the committee, the committee majority -- but Mr. Robinson himself has never made  
25 allegations of wrongdoing against the SBA.

1           So I'm more than happy having you ask him that directly, but you -- I just want to  
2           make clear on the record that there are not allegations coming from Mr. Robinson.

3           Ms. Holmes. And I will just clarify. For your awareness, allegations -- when I say  
4           "allegations," I'm meaning statements that he made and/or agreed to on the video that  
5           was released. Those are the allegations that we are discussing. And there were  
6           allegations made in that video about wrongdoing at the SBA, whether he confirmed those  
7           statements by someone else or whether he made those statements himself.

8           So that's the -- when I say "allegations," that's what I'm discussing.

9           Ms. Sawyer. Understood. So what would be very helpful is if you could identify  
10          the allegation and the wrongdoing and ask him now if that has occurred at the SBA.

11          Ms. Holmes. So that was my intent, and your team said that we didn't want to go  
12          through line by line of the video because it would --

13          Ms. Sawyer. But, if there are underlying allegations from what's in the video, I  
14          assume you can ask him about those.

15          Ms. Holmes. Okay. Then we'll go ahead and add those back into our next hour.

16                       BY MS. HOLMES:

17          Q     But, first, let's start where we left off.

18                 Just to provide a little bit of clarity around the trips that we had discussed, we  
19                 discussed one in Pennsylvania and then one in Michigan. You added the one in Georgia,  
20                 and we'll get to that in a second.

21                 But, for each of those trips and all the other trips that you worked on, there was  
22                 an initial meeting -- which you described the attendees at -- that you would decide  
23                 whether or not this event or invitation would be accepted and the Administrator would  
24                 attend, right? That was one meeting that occurred?

25                 A     Correct.

1           Q    And then you mentioned near the end of our hour that there was a second  
2 trip planning meeting. Is that right? Once the trip was decided that it was going to be  
3 on the Administrator's calendar, there was a second meeting?

4           Ms. Grooms. Just to clarify what he said, he did not say that the group decided  
5 to put it on the Administrator's calendar. I think he said that the team that met initially  
6 decided to make a recommendation to the Administrator.

7           Ms. Holmes. Okay.

8                   BY MS. HOLMES:

9           Q    For the second meeting that occurred after the Administrator decided to put  
10 something on her calendar or not, it was a trip planning meeting which you said included  
11 people from HQ and then district offices, right?

12          A    Correct.

13          Q    To the best of your recollection, who from Headquarters would be in those  
14 meetings?

15          A    To my best knowledge, it would be members of the communications team,  
16 members of our HQ field staff, members of the public engagement team, and then myself  
17 and the directors of scheduling and the directors of advance.

18          Q    Okay. Were the chief of staff or deputy chief of staff ever involved in  
19 those?

20          A    To my best knowledge, they are invited, but I do not recall if they attended  
21 that specific -- those specific meetings.

22          Q    Because this was more of the granular, like, logistics planning, right?

23          A    Correct.

24          Q    Okay. Did it include subject-matter experts on the topic of the trip?

25          A    Once again, to the best of my knowledge, they would be included, yes.



1 Q Okay. You said you went on probably a total of 10 trips in your tenure,  
2 right?

3 A 10 or less, yes.

4 Q 10 or less. Okay.

5 How many were in Georgia?

6 A To my best recollection, there was just one.

7 Q One to Georgia.

8 Do you remember when that was?

9 A That trip was earlier this year in February, I believe.

10 Q And I have just one more clarifying question from the discussion with the  
11 Democrats.

12 What day did Mr. Plews call you about the video?

13 A He called me the day the video was released.

14 Q Day of?

15 A Yes. That evening.

16 Q Okay. Did he mention if he had advanced knowledge of the video?

17 A Did he mention if he had advanced knowledge?

18 Q Uh-huh.

19 A No.

20 Q Okay. Okay.

21 Ms. Holmes. We're going to go through a couple of the press releases from the  
22 events, which we will be introducing as exhibits. So we'll go one at a time.

23 Let's start with the one to Scranton because that was in February. So we'll  
24 introduce that as majority exhibit 1.

25 [Robinson Majority Exhibit No. 1



1           Do you remember prepping for or discussing the American Rescue Plan in all of  
2 your preparations for these events when -- do you remember talking about the American  
3 Rescue Plan and the funds going to Scranton?

4           A     Just in the context that that was -- the main purpose of the event was to  
5 highlight this new announcement.

6           Q     Okay. Did any Republican Members join this trip, as far as you can  
7 remember?

8           A     As far as I can remember, no.

9           Q     In our initial scheduled transcribed interview, Mr. Representative Meuser  
10 from Pennsylvania mentioned that he lives 5 minutes from this event and did not receive  
11 an invite.

12           Do you recall why or why not Members were not invited to this event?

13           A     I have no knowledge of why Members are invited and when they get invites.

14           Q     Do you know who does make that determination?

15           A     The SBA's Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs.

16           Q     And you said, to the best of your recollection, no Democrat Members  
17 attended either?

18           A     Correct.

19           Q     Okay. All right. Is this the kind of event you were talking about when you  
20 were talking about events in the video?

21           A     I believe this trip is mentioned, yes.

22           Q     To the best of your recollection, what did you say that was true or not true  
23 about this trip in the video?

24           A     To my best knowledge, I said in the video that we were going to announce  
25 this money and that -- I believe in the video I had misstated that -- or, you know, said

1 something that was untrue that the White House directed us to go or we were going  
2 because the White House told us to. That's not true. We were invited by the White  
3 House, but there was no demand that we go to this event.

4 And I do not recall if it is mentioned during the video about inviting Republican  
5 Members or inviting Democratic Members only. Once again, that conversation never  
6 happened. There was no discussion about -- as far as I'm aware, no discussion about  
7 inviting any Members. It was not part of my job.

8 Q Okay. And, from either personal or professional knowledge, Scranton,  
9 Pennsylvania, is the hometown of the current President, Biden. Is that correct?

10 A Correct. I believe he was raised there.

11 Q Okay.

12 Ms. Holmes. I'm going to do the next press release, which we will mark as  
13 exhibit -- majority exhibit 2, which is the other trip we talked about in the prior hour from  
14 2023 to Michigan.

15 [Robinson Majority Exhibit No. 2  
16 was marked for identification.]

17 BY MS. HOLMES:

18 Q Okay. You said that you couldn't quite remember when you went to  
19 Michigan in 2023. Does the June timeframe sound about right?

20 A It does not. This trip that exhibit 2 describes, I was not on.

21 Q You were not on this one. Okay.

22 For the record, I will introduce the exhibit, anyway. This is exhibit 2. It is a  
23 press release published on June 9th, 2023, entitled "Friday: Biden-Harris Administration  
24 Officials to Visit Detroit."

25 So you were not on this trip. You were on a different trip to Michigan in 2023?

- 1 A Correct.
- 2 Q Okay. Did you do the initial trip meeting for this event?
- 3 A To my best knowledge, I would have been on at least one of the trip calls,  
4 yes.
- 5 Q Okay. One but not both?
- 6 A Just to clarify, there are more than one trip call for any trip.
- 7 Q Okay.
- 8 A But, yes, I would have been on one of those trip calls.
- 9 Q Which one would you have been on?
- 10 A The calls planning the event after it was decided that the Administrator  
11 would go to it.
- 12 Q Okay. You wouldn't have been on that initial one when the Administrator  
13 is deciding what's going to be on her schedule or not?
- 14 A Yes. I would have been on that call as well.
- 15 Q Okay. On that one and then the planning meeting?
- 16 A Yes.
- 17 Q Okay.
- 18 Ms. Grooms. I think -- hold on a second.
- 19 [Discussion off the record.]
- 20 Mr. Robinson. Yeah. Just to clarify, like, the meeting cadence --
- 21 BY MS. HOLMES:
- 22 Q Yeah.
- 23 A -- because I did describe it earlier. There is a meeting once a week where  
24 the staff does the going through the invites.
- 25 Q Uh-huh.

1 A I am on that call.

2 Q Okay.

3 A There is a meeting then following that meeting on the same week. That is  
4 the meeting where the Administrator confirms or passes on events.

5 And then, for any event or trip, once that trip is confirmed, there will be multiple  
6 trip calls to plan out the schedule and the details of those events. And, when I said I  
7 would have been on one of the trip calls, I was referring to those calls.

8 Q Okay. About how many trip calls per event do you think occur, to the best  
9 of your knowledge?

10 A It generally varies.

11 Q Okay.

12 A Most of the time, there's probably three or four.

13 Q Three or four? Okay.

14 The ones that have four or the larger number, are those ones that are just more  
15 logistically challenging? More important? How do you decide -- not you. How does  
16 the SBA decide how many meetings occur during that trip, to the best of your knowledge?

17 A Yeah. I believe it is, in general, due to the nature of the trip that -- whether  
18 it is a lot of back-and-forth between what's involved in the trip or how long in advance we  
19 have to plan the trip. If we have a longer time period, we'll generally have more  
20 meetings just to make sure everything is solid.

21 Q Okay. And I can't quite remember. I apologize. You're going to have to  
22 remind me.

23 Which trip did you say you had a week to plan? Was that the Scranton one, or  
24 was that the Michigan one?

25 A I believe I was referring to the Scranton trip that we had less than a week to

1 plan.

2 Q Okay. Do you remember about how long this trip had lead time?

3 Ms. Grooms. "This trip" being?

4 Ms. Holmes. Sorry. The June 2023 to Michigan.

5 Mr. Robinson. I do not.

6 BY MS. HOLMES:

7 Q Okay. Do you remember talking about this trip on the video?

8 Ms. Grooms. Again, the Exhibit 2 trip?

9 Ms. Holmes. Yes. Exhibit 2.

10 Mr. Robinson. I do not believe I talked about this trip on the video. I could be  
11 mistaken.

12 BY MS. HOLMES:

13 Q Okay. And you can't recall -- other than you were probably on a call about  
14 it, you can't recall any of the substance of that call or discussions around this trip?

15 A Correct. I just recall being on one trip call. I would have been on one call  
16 to assign the memos.

17 Q Okay. And then once you get the memos, you said they go toward the  
18 briefing book for the Administrator?

19 A Correct.

20 Q Okay. Let's talk about that for a quick second. Let me find that particular  
21 one.

22 So the books that you did, you did those daily for the Administrator? The  
23 briefing books?

24 A Correct.

25 Q Okay. What was included in those? I think you said memos and schedule.

1           A    Yes.  The schedule for the day would have been broken down for her.  
2   Then there would have been event memos or briefing memos for the corresponding  
3   event if they required one or if they needed one.  And then the final pages are fact  
4   sheets and data for the Administrator just for reference.

5           Q    And the memos, fact sheets, those things come most often from the subject  
6   matter experts?

7           A    The memos most often come from the subject matter experts.  The fact  
8   sheets that are at the end of the book, I compile -- or compiled.

9           Q    Okay.  Where did you pull information from for those?

10          A    All the information was pulled from publicly available resources or a daily  
11   email that updates the number of loan activity.

12          Q    Okay.  So the sheets and fact sheets and data, was that all SBA specific?

13          A    No.

14          Q    Okay.  What other sort of information was included in those?

15          A    In general, one of the documents contains updated unemployment  
16   numbers, numbers of new small business applications when those numbers are updated,  
17   information on loan interest rates if those are adjusted, things of that nature.  The  
18   document, in general, is four pages, so --

19          Q    Okay.

20          A    -- there's a lot of stuff in it.

21          Q    I can imagine.

22                Did it ever include information about small business closures?

23          A    I do recall there are times where I highlighted an article about the number of  
24   small business closures and what caused those.

25          Q    Okay.  When you got the memos back, did you ever review them for



1 accuracy before giving them to the Administrator?

2 A For some memos and some program offices that submitted them, I would  
3 review not for policy accuracy but for formatting and to make sure that they were  
4 following all procedures that they're supposed to follow.

5 Q You were kind of like the last check before the Administrator saw it?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Okay. How did you decide what to give in the fact sheets and data? Just  
8 what was relevant at the time?

9 A Those sheets existed when I came into the role. I adjusted some numbers,  
10 and then other information was requested -- would be requested by the Administrator to  
11 include.

12 Q Okay. Do you remember which ones were for specific requests for  
13 inclusion?

14 A I do remember that she requested a breakdown on --  
15 Mr. Sempertegui. Real quick, Lauren.

16 I just want to confirm to the extent -- you know, the executive branch has some  
17 confidentiality interests in some of the conversations that the Administrator may have  
18 had with Tyler, so I want to lay that out. I think, you know, we're comfortable with him  
19 answering this question, but I just want to flag that for you. And to the extent that  
20 some information he's providing may be something where we have some interest in.

21 Ms. Holmes. Okay. If you want to assert a privilege, obviously, happy to hear  
22 you out.

23 BY MS. HOLMES:

24 Q Until then, if you could go ahead and answer the question.

25 A Yes. The one that I actually do remember the Administrator requesting

1 was an updated breakdown of small business ownership by demographics and what each  
2 group -- the number of small businesses and what those small businesses -- their  
3 percentage that they contribute to the economy.

4 Q Do you remember how she made that request to you?

5 A As far as I remember, she made the request verbally.

6 Q Okay. And was that pretty early on when you took over this role?

7 A It would have been -- I believe it was sometime last year. The numbers  
8 were outdated.

9 Q Were there any particular States or territories that she wanted data from  
10 that you can recall?

11 A So -- yes. For any trip to any State, she, as part of her briefing book,  
12 included data relevant to that State.

13 Ms. Grooms. Just to clarify, I think you said "she" a couple times.

14 Mr. Robinson. The Administrator. Sorry.

15 Ms. Grooms. Yeah. The briefing book included the data, or she included the  
16 data in the briefing book?

17 Mr. Robinson. The briefing book included the data.

18 BY MS. HOLMES:

19 Q At her request for each State?

20 A Yes.

21 Q Okay. And that was a verbal request or written request?

22 A Sorry. The request for the data for each State she visited was not a  
23 request. That was just something we've always included to give her background on the  
24 places she was visiting.

25 Q Okay.

1 Ms. Meers. Can we take a pause?

2 Tyler, can you clarify that again just to make sure I'm following?

3 Mr. Robinson. Yes. The Administrator requested -- the data the Administrator  
4 requested verbally to me was the breakdown of the demographics and what they  
5 contributed. The data on each State that she was going to visit was not requested.  
6 That is general information that we provide to the Administrator for background on her  
7 visits.

8 BY MS. HOLMES:

9 Q Okay. For the breakdown for small business ownership by demographics,  
10 did she have particular areas that she wanted to focus on or highlight? Particular  
11 geographical areas?

12 A I do not recall.

13 Q Okay.

14 [Discussion off the record.]

15 Mr. Robinson. Yeah. Just to clarify, that document was already in the briefing  
16 book. I just updated those numbers. They were from -- I think the latest number, I  
17 believe, was from fiscal year 2020, and she wanted the latest available numbers.

18 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

19 Ms. Grooms. Just to clarify, it sounds like the Administrator's specific request to  
20 you was for you to update an outdated document that was inside the briefing book.  
21 That's the thing you were --

22 Mr. Robinson. Correct.

23 BY MS. HOLMES:

24 Q How often did you update that document?

25 A One document was updated weekly.

1 Q Which one?

2 A I call it the economic dashboard.

3 Q Okay.

4 A The other document was not officially titled anything. I refer to it as the  
5 top-line data.

6 Q Okay.

7 A That document was three pages of information, and of that three pages, I  
8 updated daily about 10 numbers.

9 Q Do you remember which 10?

10 A Yes. They all involved the 7(a), 504, and microloan programs. A daily  
11 update of where those programs stood.

12 Q So it's 10 data points within those three programs?

13 A Around 10.

14 Q Around 10. Okay.

15 Other than the breakdown of ownership by demographic, were there any other  
16 demographic information or statistics provided in the briefing book?

17 A Yes. And, for her trips to each State, part of that -- the district office  
18 background would have a breakdown of small business ownership in those States.

19 Q Did it include any information about the representatives of that State, either  
20 at the State or Federal level?

21 A Only -- as far as I can recall, only to the extent of if a Member of Congress or  
22 an elected official was visiting with her.

23 Q Okay. What about if the White House was with her?

24 A Then it would have a brief bio of the person who was on the trip.

25 Q Okay. In the time that we have been sitting here, have you been able to

1 narrow down the timeframe for your trip with the Administrator to Michigan?

2 A I'm sorry. I cannot. The only thing about the timing that I can remember  
3 was it was when the Detroit auto fair was going on.

4 Q In 2023?

5 A I believe so.

6 Q Okay. So, at the event that was near the Detroit auto show/fair, can you  
7 tell me what you remember about that trip? Who was there? What you were there  
8 for?

9 A I think I mentioned earlier, as I recall, I do not recall any elected officials  
10 being present on that trip. The first event of the day was the fireside chat with our  
11 SBDA partner at the Henry Ford House.

12 And then, as far as I remember, the Administrator visited a manufacturing small  
13 business that does metal work. Like, custom-made metal pieces and railings and things  
14 like that. And then I believe there was an additional small business, but I do not  
15 remember that one.

16 Q Okay. Your Georgia trip you mentioned when you were talking with the  
17 minority, do you remember about when that was?

18 A Yes. That trip was earlier this year.

19 Q February? March?

20 A I believe it would have been February or March.

21 Q To the best of your recollection, what was the purpose of that trip?

22 A To the best of my memory, the main purpose of that trip was the  
23 Administrator speaking at a trade conference about government contracting.

24 Q Okay.

25 A And then we did an event -- I believe it would have been February because

1 we did an event focusing on access to capital for African-American business owners at  
2 Clark Atlanta University.

3 Q To the best of your recollection -- I think you mentioned two parts of that  
4 trip. So there was one at Clark, and then what was the other location?

5 A It was at a hotel conference center for a trade show.

6 Q Okay. And that was in Atlanta?

7 A Yes.

8 Q Okay. For the hotel conference center in Atlanta, do you recall any Federal  
9 or State representatives being present?

10 A I do recall that other Federal officials spoke.

11 Q Okay.

12 A But I do not recall which ones nor do I recall when they spoke. It was a -- I  
13 believe the conference lasted over 2 or 3 days.

14 Q Oh, okay. So a number of officials, probably?

15 A Correct. The Administrator just attended for 1 day.

16 Q Okay. What, to the best of your recollection, was her speech focused on?

17 A As far as I can remember, it was about government contracting.

18 Q Was it about expanding government contracting? Providing opportunities?  
19 Do you remember?

20 A I do not remember what -- I had left right as she spoke to jump to the next  
21 event, and I did not read her speech prior, so --

22 Q By "jump to the next event," what event are you talking about?

23 A The Clark Atlanta one, I believe.

24 Q Okay. So doing advance for that?

25 A Yes.

1 Q Okay. For the Clark Atlanta University one, do you recall if any State- or  
2 Federal-elected officials attended?

3 A I do not recall. I do not believe so.

4 Q Okay. And, to the best of your recollection, what did the Administrator  
5 speak about at that event?

6 A For that event, she talked about access to capital and the challenges that  
7 African-American business owners face.

8 Q Did she highlight any particular programs within the SBA that could expand  
9 access to capital?

10 A I do not recall her mentioning specific programs.

11 Q Okay. Okay.

12 Ms. Holmes. We're going to introduce majority exhibit 3, which we will hand out  
13 in short order.

14 For the record, this is a press release published on January 12th, 2024, entitled  
15 "Readout of SBA Administrator Guzman's Visit to Allentown with President Biden."

16 [Robinson Majority Exhibit No. 3  
17 was marked for identification.]

18 BY MS. HOLMES:

19 Q Okay. Mr. Robinson, do you remember this trip occurring?

20 A Yes. I do remember this trip. I was not on this trip with the  
21 Administrator.

22 Q Okay. What was your role in preparing for this trip?

23 A Once again, my role would have just been to prepare the briefing book for  
24 this trip.

25 Q Do you remember anything that was specifically requested for the briefing

1 book about this trip?

2 A I do not remember anything out of the ordinary.



1

2 [12:18 p.m.]

3

BY MS. HOLMES:

4

Q When you say out of the ordinary, meaning?

5

A Anything that would not have been in the briefing book in general. There

6

was no special request.

7

Q Because it was with the President of the United States, were there any

8

additional information, stats, things that the Administrator needed to prepare for an

9

event specifically with the President?

10

A To the best of my knowledge, no. We try to prepare her as well as we can

11

for every event.

12

Q There's probably additional logistics you had to go through, though, right?

13

A For this event, I believe so, because there are Secret Service logistics that we

14

have to deal with.

15

Q Yeah. Do you remember who from the SBA went with the Administrator

16

on this trip?

17

A I have no knowledge of who went with the Administrator on this trip.

18

Q Okay. Do you remember if there were any Federal or State-elected officials

19

on this trip?

20

A I do not remember what elected officials were invited or if they were invited

21

or present.

22

Q You mentioned at the beginning of today that you only knew about the

23

Michigan MOU from the press release. Is that correct?

24

A I remember it being discussed that the press release was going out. I did

25

not read the press release.

1 Q Okay. To the best of your recollection, when was that conversation prior to  
2 the press release being released?

3 A To my best knowledge, it was during a meeting when we were discussing the  
4 schedule for the next week. So it would have been a week before the press release was  
5 released.

6 Q So that would put you beginning of April-ish?

7 A I do not know when the actual press release was released.

8 Q Okay. The press release went out on April -- or March 19th.  
9 So -- sorry -- beginning of March-ish, a week before then?

10 A Yes, it would've been the week before.

11 Q Prior to that discussion, had you heard anything about a memorandum of  
12 understanding or an agreement with the State of Michigan?

13 A No.

14 Q Prior to that agree -- prior to that meeting, had you ever worked with  
15 anyone at the Michigan secretary of state's office?

16 A No.

17 Q After that meeting, did you work with anyone from the Michigan secretary  
18 of state's office?

19 A No.

20 Q So it's your testimony that you have not had any contact with anyone from  
21 the Michigan secretary of state's office?

22 A As far as I'm aware.

23 Q Okay. During a briefing with Jennifer Kim, who we talked about earlier, a  
24 committee staffer told that the negotiations with Michigan over the MOU began in  
25 December of 2021. What was your role with the SBA then?

1 A December of 2021, I was -- sorry.

2 Q Yeah, yeah.

3 A December of 2021, I was not with the SBA.

4 Q Can you remind me of where you were at?

5 A December of 2021, I was unemployed.

6 Q What were the circumstances that led to that?

7 Ms. Meers. Wait. This is -- can we take a pause -- outside the scope of this  
8 transcribed interview.

9 Ms. Holmes. December 2021?

10 Ms. Meers. His employment status.

11 Ms. Holmes. It's just -- yeah, it's just background of where he was at and what  
12 he was doing at the time he --

13 Ms. Meers. I think he answered the question, though.

14 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

15 BY MS. HOLMES:

16 Q Do you know what Executive Order 14019 is?

17 A I do not.

18 Q It's the executive order involving voter registration given by President Biden  
19 in 2021. I think you said that you were working on the Biden campaign leading up to  
20 him becoming President and then went over to the SBA shortly thereafter.

21 You don't recall any discussions about the executive order asking agencies to  
22 become -- or to help register voters in the election?

23 A I do not recall anything about the executive order.

24 Q Do you know anything about the executive order now?

25 A I -- yes, I do now.

1 Q What do you know about the executive order now?

2 Ms. Grooms. Outside of counsel conversations.

3 Mr. Robinson. Yeah, what I know is from counsel conversations.

4 BY MS. HOLMES:

5 Q An attorney was in the room?

6 A Yes.

7 Q Representing you about this deposition --

8 A Yes.

9 Q -- transcribed interview?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. I will note for the record that we don't always recognize  
12 attorney-client privilege, but I'm not going to push on that one right now.

13 As part of the discussion that you had about the press release going out, what do  
14 you remember from that discussion?

15 A To my best knowledge, it was just that the communications team going over  
16 their strategy and event for the upcoming week, and just noting that they were doing the  
17 press release about an MOU.

18 Q Was there anything different about this press release?

19 A I -- I do not review press releases.

20 Q Sorry. Let me rephrase that.

21 Was there anything different about the discussion around this press release versus  
22 other press releases?

23 A Not to my memory, no.

24 Q Okay. Were you aware that the Administrator was testifying before our  
25 committee the following day?

1 Ms. Grooms. The following day, following what?

2 Ms. Holmes. From the press release.

3 Ms. Grooms. So the day after?

4 BY MS. HOLMES:

5 Q It's March 20th. So you were going over the schedule, right? So you said  
6 that it was going out on the 19th. Were you also discussing her appearance before this  
7 committee on the 20th?

8 A Just that she was appearing before the committee that day.

9 Q Was there any discussion about whether or not this might come up, to the  
10 best of your recollection?

11 A No, not -- to the best of my knowledge, it was not. It was just a  
12 run-through of her weekly schedule.

13 Q Okay. After the press release was made public, you said you didn't read it,  
14 right?

15 A Correct.

16 Q Okay. Do you have any knowledge about what the memorandum of  
17 understanding does or what it was going to do for Michigan or how it would impact your  
18 events or your job?

19 Ms. Grooms. Outside of conversations with counsel in preparation for this.

20 Mr. Robinson. Yeah. Outside of conversation with the counsel, I did not  
21 under- -- I had no knowledge of the MOU or what it contained or any information other  
22 than there was an MOU signed.

23 Ms. Holmes. Okay. Do you know who at the SBA is in charge of implementing  
24 this MOU?

25 Mr. Robinson. I do not.

1           Ms. Holmes. Have you received any training under -- for voter registration under  
2 this MOU or outside of it?

3           Ms. Grooms. Do you mean training from the SBA --

4           Ms. Holmes. Yes.

5           Ms. Grooms. -- voter registration?

6           Mr. Robinson. No, I have not received training from the SBA on voter  
7 registration.

8                           BY MS. HOLMES:

9           Q    And you haven't talked to anyone from the Michigan Department of State,  
10 so no training from them either?

11          A    Correct, no training from them.

12          Q    Okay. You said you got Hatch Act training, right, and the most recent was  
13 maybe 6 months ago?

14          A    I believe -- yes, I have received Hatch Act training, and the most recent was a  
15 few months ago.

16          Q    Okay. Was there anything in that training about voter registration  
17 occurring at SBA events?

18          A    Not that I can recall.

19          Q    Okay. To the best of your knowledge, does the SBA have the voter  
20 registration link up on the website?

21          A    I do not know.

22          Q    You said you recently moved over to the disaster loan -- can you remind me  
23 what it's called? Sorry.

24          A    The Office of Disaster Recovery and Resil- -- or Recovery and Resilience.

25          Q    Okay. And in your day-to-day roles there, do you have any overlap

1 between disaster loans and voter registration?

2 A No, I do not.

3 Q Okay. Have you ever heard of an organization called Rock the Vote?

4 A Yes, I have.

5 Q What do you know about them?

6 A I know that they are an organization that focuses on registering -- I believe  
7 their target is youth voters.

8 Q And what context did you hear about them or do you know about them?

9 A Just in the context of having been involved in political campaigns for a  
10 number of years. I've never personally worked with them.

11 Q Okay. Do you know if anyone at the SBA has worked with them, to the best  
12 of your knowledge?

13 A To my best of my knowledge, I do not know.

14 Q Okay. And you personally have not worked with them?

15 A No.

16 Q Okay. Do you recall what the small business boom is?

17 A I have general awareness of what we refer to as the small business boom.

18 Q And what did you refer to as the small business boom?

19 A From what I understand, it is the growth of small businesses since the end of  
20 the pandemic.

21 Q Did that include any information about the decline of other small businesses  
22 since the pandemic or is it just the ones that are being started?

23 A As far as I can remember, it is the businesses being started.

24 Q Is that -- is that an SBA --

25 Ms. Harrington. Is this within the scope, Lauren?

1 Ms. Holmes. You can't make that objection, Ellen.

2 Mr. Sempertegui. Yeah. Lauren, is this within the scope?

3 Ms. Holmes. Yes, this is related to an event that I would like to discuss, which we  
4 can actually introduce right now. This is going to be majority exhibit 4. Because the  
5 Administrator has been traveling and promoting the small business boom.

6 [Robinson Majority Exhibit No. 4  
7 was marked for identification.]

8 Ms. Holmes. Okay. So this is the White House report on the Biden-Harris small  
9 business boom, which was talked about in the -- what was marked as majority exhibit 2.  
10 So you mentioned that, as you understand, that the SBA understood the small  
11 business boom to be a calculation of new businesses started since the pandemic?

12 Ms. Beca-Barragan. I'm sorry. Is this exhibit 2 or 4?

13 Ms. Holmes. This is 4, but it's discussed in the press release of exhibit 2 --

14 Ms. Beca-Barragan. Okay.

15 Ms. Holmes. -- which is the scoping answer.

16 Ms. Beca-Barragan. Thank you.

17 Ms. Grooms. This is exhibit 4?

18 Ms. Holmes. Yeah. Sorry. I should've crossed that out.

19 Ms. Grooms. And just for the record, he has not seen this document before.

20 BY MS. HOLMES:

21 Q You've not seen this document before?

22 A No.

23 Q Okay. That's okay. We won't do the line by line through that then.  
24 Yeah, nobody needs that stress.

25 Okay. But you said that the SBA understood it to be how many small businesses



1 that have been started since the start of the pandemic?

2 A That is how I understand it.

3 Q Okay. In what context did you use this sort of terminology or phrasing?

4 Was it in the briefing books for the Administrator?

5 A I don't believe I've ever used it in an individual context, other than --

6 Q Okay.

7 A -- it would've been in the Administrator's talking points or in her briefing  
8 book.

9 Q Okay. So talking points within the briefing book too?

10 A Occasionally.

11 Q Occasionally. Okay.

12 Who drafted those?

13 A Overall talking points are drafted by the Office of Communications and  
14 Public Liaison --

15 Q Okay.

16 A -- or Public -- what are they called? Sorry. OCPL, Office of  
17 Communications and Public Liaison.

18 Q That's okay.

19 A I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that to you.

20 Q I just work here. Okay.

21 Ms. Grooms. That's why we say, "to the best of my recollection."

22 Ms. Holmes. Covers all things.

23 BY MS. HOLMES:

24 Q Okay. So the "small business boom" terminology was just something you  
25 heard around the office?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Okay. Do you remember who you first heard it from?

3 A As far as I can recall, it is just a common phrase that we use -- that the  
4 Administrator uses in events to describe the growth of small businesses.

5 Q Okay.

6 A I can't recall a single person who -- anytime they specifically mentioned it.

7 Q Okay. But it was just kind of a general term used around the office every  
8 now and then?

9 A Correct.

10 Q Okay. Do you know what the Office of Special Counsel is?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Do you know if there is a ongoing investigation of the SBA and/or you by the  
13 Office of Special Counsel?

14 Mr. Cantlon. I'm going to object to that question.

15 Ms. Holmes. On what grounds?

16 Mr. Cantlon. The OSC process is confidential in nature, so he can neither deny or  
17 admit there is an investigation, so I'm going to let that be.

18 Ms. Holmes. I think the rights of Congress to obtain information override that.

19 Mr. Cantlon. Well, the actual OSC itself is a confidential process, so we want to --

20 Ms. Holmes. Sure.

21 Mr. Cantlon. -- respect them. We want you to respect that as well.

22 Mr. Sempertegui. So, Lauren, may I suggest, can we come back to this line of  
23 questioning towards -- at the end? And then we get over -- we can cover the other  
24 questions that you had, so we can --

25 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

1 Mr. Sempertegui. I think we're going to have a little back-and-forth on this one.

2 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

3 Mr. Sempertegui. So we save the best for last, if you will.

4 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

5 Mr. Sempertegui. Are you okay with that?

6 Ms. Holmes. Yes, we can do that.

7 Mr. Sempertegui. Okay. Thank you so much.

8 BY MS. HOLMES:

9 Q All right. The last part I want to go through on the video is not necessarily  
10 specific quotations that happened or did not happen or things you confirmed or denied,  
11 but I think throughout the video, it is portrayed that you are arguing that the SBA has  
12 been going to battleground States to campaign on behalf of President Biden, only inviting  
13 Democrats, not Republicans, et cetera.

14 You have denied all of those statements on the record.

15 The Small Business Committee did their own research, and we looked at all of the  
16 SBA press releases from the time in question that you had been discussing at the video,  
17 and we found 27 trips to battleground States just from the public press releases alone.  
18 Fourteen of them included a Democrat Member of Congress, and only one included a  
19 Republican Member.

20 So from objective third-party research of -- or, I guess not objective, but subjective  
21 SBA press releases, it does seem that your statements had some validity to them.

22 Can you help me reconcile your statements then with your statements now with  
23 what is publicly available about the trips that the Administrator has taken?

24 A Once again, during the video I did say those things. The status of a State as  
25 a battleground State has never, in my experience, been discussed as a reason to go to a

1 certain State.

2 As far as coincidence between how many visits the Administrator made to those  
3 States, I can't say. That's, as you said, you know, something that was subjective for you.

4 Yeah. You know, in my experience and my work at the SBA, the status of those  
5 States being battleground States or important to an election have never been the reason  
6 we went to those States.

7 Q To the best of your recollection or knowledge, were there ever events that  
8 you guys did that press releases did not go out on?

9 A I do not know what events press releases go out on. I'm not part of the  
10 press release process.

11 Q Okay. So you've denied everything you said in the video. How do we  
12 know that you're telling us the truth today?

13 A The video, once again, was in context of, I was on a date. I was not -- one, I  
14 was not thinking about trying to be factually accurate. You know, those statements  
15 were made to impress somebody. Some of those statements were made to alleviate her  
16 fears that -- she was visibly concerned about the President losing reelection.

17 I think, you know, on a date you're not trying -- you're not under the same  
18 circumstances that I am right now, being in a House committee situation and, you know,  
19 having to, by law, tell the truth. You know, I said those things on the video. I deeply  
20 regret everything I said in the video. I wish I never would've said it. It does not reflect  
21 the truth of my experience at the SBA.

22 You know, what I've said today is the truth, as I know it and as I understand it,  
23 and -- yeah.

24 Q Okay. And you mentioned that you moved from your position in the  
25 Administrator's office to the disaster office. And it was your testimony that it was done

1 voluntarily, and you were not asked to move there but you wanted to move there.

2 Ms. Grooms. So I think he said he's on a detail.

3 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

4 BY MS. HOLMES:

5 Q A detail?

6 A I am on a detail. It was -- I did ask for that opportunity. As I understand  
7 it, part of it was also to relieve the stress on me. After the video coming out and being  
8 in the position I was in, Arthur expressed concern about my mental well-being and ability  
9 to do the job.

10 Q So Arthur was the one that had that conversation with you?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Okay. And you officially made the switch at the end of May?

13 A The beginning of May.

14 Q Beginning of May. Excuse me. Sorry.

15 But you don't believe that was in retaliation for this video?

16 A I do not believe it was in retaliation.

17 Q Okay. Did you discuss this interview with any of the Democrat members or  
18 Democrat staff on this committee prior to today?

19 A No, I did not.

20 Q To the best of your knowledge, did anyone at the SBA discuss this interview  
21 with the Democrats prior to today?

22 A I have no knowledge of anyone's conversations outside my own.

23 Q Okay. And are you aware of the SBA contacting any other secretaries of  
24 state to discuss voting registration in those States?

25 A I am not aware.

1 Q Are you aware of the SBA contacting other secretaries of states to discuss  
2 small business concerns?

3 A I do not know if those -- if they contact the secretary of states, no.

4 Q Okay. So in your experience, you never had contact with other secretaries  
5 of states?

6 A I have -- personally have never had contact with secretaries of state, as far as  
7 I can remember.

8 Q Okay.

9 Ms. Grooms. As part of your job?

10 Mr. Robinson. As part of my job, yeah.

11 Ms. Grooms. With the SBA?

12 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

13 Ms. Holmes. Thank you for the clarification.

14 I think we can jump back to the OSC, so --

15 Mr. Sempertegui. Well, I think, look, as it relates to any questions related to  
16 OSC, right, the investigation process, to the extent there's any activity going on related to  
17 investigation, whether, you know, individuals are subjects or whether they're witnesses  
18 to the investigation, all of that is confidential, right? And OSC sort of makes it clear that  
19 it's confidential. And so we are in a position where we don't think it's appropriate for  
20 Tyler to sort of discuss any topics related to OSC.

21 Certainly to the extent that you have some specific questions, we're happy  
22 to -- you send those over to the agency -- we're happy to look them over and do our  
23 necessary, you know, research to confirm what we're providing you is not in any way sort  
24 of putting the SBA in a position where we may not be following statutory or regulatory  
25 guidance, right? That's the big concern.

1           Ms. Holmes. So you're telling me that the OSC is exerting privilege over that  
2 information?

3           Mr. Sempertegui. No.

4           Ms. Holmes. Are you exerting privilege over that information?

5           Mr. Sempertegui. I'm telling you that information as related -- any information  
6 related to OSC investigation, right, enforcement action, if it does exist or it doesn't exist,  
7 all of that is confidential in nature.

8           Ms. Holmes. But the committee has a right to get that information and that  
9 confidential information, and you can't assert confidentiality privilege on behalf of OSC.

10          Mr. Cantlon. But we're required to keep confidentiality under that process, so  
11 we can't disclose that information.

12          Ms. Holmes. Okay. We can have a conversation offline with OSC and you, and  
13 we'll just set it up.

14          Mr. Sempertegui. Yeah, of course.

15          Ms. Holmes. Okay. Sounds good.

16          Mr. Sempertegui. Yeah, that makes sense.

17          Ms. Holmes. Are we good?

18          Mr. Eckhardt. Yeah.

19          Ms. Holmes. Okay. We can go off the record.

20          [Recess.]

1

2 [1:38 p.m.]

3 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you, Tyler. We appreciate you being here.

4 Once again, it's Ellen Harrington and Renata with the minority.

5 BY MS. HARRINGTON:

6 Q Is there anything you would like to add at the beginning, or would  
7 you -- anything you'd like to add to this?8 A Yes. Ms. Holmes had asked earlier if there is anything I'd like to clarify,  
9 misstatements from the video. I have a few. This is not a comprehensive list.10 And want to also thank you for, like, not wanting to -- save the embarrassment of  
11 having to watch the video.12 In my experience, the White House -- the White House, nor anyone at the SBA,  
13 has declared or said that we should only invite Democrats to SBA events. The  
14 White House has never said, don't invite Republicans to SBA events, and any impression  
15 that I gave that -- or any statement I gave that gives that impression, I'm sorry for.16 Two, I've never heard Administrator Guzman say that the SBA is going to a  
17 battleground State to campaign for President Biden. In fact, in my work at the SBA, I've  
18 not seen the Administrator, or anyone else at the SBA, use official times or resources to  
19 campaign for President Joe Biden or anyone else.20 With regard to the Montana trip that is discussed on the video -- and, again,  
21 acknowledging that I don't know the exact context of the video -- I did not hear anyone at  
22 the SBA, including the Administrator, say, we're going to Montana to help Senator Tester  
23 or discuss the need for him to win the seat in Montana to maintain a Senate majority. I  
24 also did not hear anyone at the White House and, to the best of my knowledge, no one at  
25 the White House has said, for the SBA to invite Senator Tester but not invite the other



1 Senator or the two Members of Congress because they're Republicans. Any contrary  
2 impression of that is not accurate.

3 And on the video, Grace said and talked about indirectly campaigning for  
4 President Joe Biden. I don't know what she meant by that phrase. Those were her  
5 words and not mine.

6 And, again, in my work at the SBA, I've not seen the Administrator, or anyone else  
7 at the SBA, use official time or resources to campaign for President Joe Biden or anyone  
8 else.

9 And there's also a reference in the video to the Administrator testifying before  
10 Congress. I want to make it clear that I was not involved in any of the preparation for  
11 the Administrator for her appearing before Congress. That's not part of my job, and any  
12 contrary statements or impressions from the video that imply that are not accurate.

13 And I just hope that clarifies kind of the scope of everything and any concerns you  
14 all might have.

15 Q Okay. Thank you, Tyler. We appreciate that.

16 I just want to go through some events. I just did a little bit of research on my  
17 own and quickly found some events in which the Administrator traveled -- traveled with  
18 Republican Members of Congress. I limited my research to the Small Business  
19 Committee.

20 So you may or may not be aware of these events, but I just want to ask you  
21 quickly.

22 Here is the first press release we'll enter into the record as exhibit A, and if you  
23 pass it along so everyone can have a copy.

24 [Robinson Minority Exhibit No. A  
25 was marked for identification.]

1 Ms. Harrington. Were you aware that the Administrator traveled --

2 Ms. Grooms. Can you pause for 1 second. Do you have stickers?

3 Ms. Harrington. Thank you. I'm sorry.

4 Ms. Grooms. You're fine.

5 Ms. Harrington. Great. Thank you.

6 And you may or may not be aware of these events, but I'm just wondering if you  
7 were aware that the Administrator traveled to Fort Hood in Texas to highlight the Boots  
8 to Business Program with Chairman Williams of the House Small Business Committee in  
9 March 2023?

10 Mr. Robinson. Yes, I remember that trip.

11 Ms. Harrington. You do remember that trip. Thank you.

12 Let me pass, this will be exhibit B.

13 [Robinson Minority Exhibit No. B  
14 was marked for identification.]

15 Ms. Harrington. Were you aware the Administrator did an event with  
16 Ms. Van Duyne in February 2022 to highlight the Shuttered Venues Operating Grant  
17 Program?

18 Mr. Robinson. I do not recall this event.

19 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you.

20 [Robinson Minority Exhibit No. C  
21 was marked for identification.]

22 Ms. Harrington. Here's exhibit C.

23 Were you aware the Administrator met with Ms. Salazar of the Small Business  
24 Committee to highlight government contracting opportunities and visited small  
25 businesses in Miami in March 2022?

1           Mr. Robinson. I remember a trip to Miami. I do not recall which Members of  
2 Congress were on that trip.

3           Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

4           And the last one I have -- and, again, this is just super quick, cursory research.

5           There could very well be more. This is exhibit D.

1 [Robinson Minority Exhibit No. D  
2 was marked for identification.]

3 BY MS. HARRINGTON:

4 Q Were you aware the Administrator conducted a Main Street walking tour  
5 with Mr. Aaron Bean of Florida in August 2023, also a member of the House Small  
6 Business Committee?

7 A Yes, I was aware of this trip.

8 Q Okay. Thank you.

9 So to the best of your understanding, can you tell me why the Administrator  
10 travels?

11 A As I said earlier, the Administrator travels throughout the country strictly to  
12 highlight the opportunities that the SBA provides for small business owners and to  
13 highlight the successes of our small business owners but also to learn about the  
14 challenges they face in operating their businesses.

15 Q And I just do want to reiterate for the record that these are all trips with  
16 Republican Members of Congress on our committee. And, again, there could be more.  
17 It was a quick -- it was a quick search.

18 Okay. So let's turn to -- and I think we've clarified this, but I just want to go  
19 through it quickly just to clear everything up. The majority has asked questions about  
20 the Hatch Act. Do you have any reason to believe that the administration violated the  
21 Hatch Act?

22 A No, I do not.

23 Q Okay. Thank you.

24 The majority also talked a little bit about the MOU. And actually they brought  
25 you in today to talk about voter registration and that MOU. And I just want to be clear

1 for the record, do you have any understanding -- in your role, do you have any  
2 understanding of the MOU and the MOA?

3 A No, I do not.

4 Q And there was no involvement with your role in the MOU or MOA?

5 A Not that I recall.

6 Q Okay. Thank you.

7 And I do want to just clarify, you mentioned some of your responsibilities on the  
8 trips with the Administrator were limited to advance work, correct?

9 A Correct.

10 Q Correct. Okay. Thank you.

11 You were also asked a series of questions about different events in which  
12 Members were or were not present. Do you know whether or not Congress was in  
13 session on those days?

14 A I do not know.

15 Q Okay. Thank you.

16 In the first hour of the deposition (sic), you stated that you received emails from  
17 the White House asking -- or the White House mentioning, or an invitation to attend an  
18 event. Is your understanding that this was an invitation or a command?

19 A It is my understanding that they were all invitations.

20 Q Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

21 Ms. Grooms. Could we just have a minute?

22 [Discussion off the record.]

23 Mr. Robinson. And to clarify, I did not receive the emails personally. They  
24 were submitted to the scheduling inbox.

25 Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you. My apologies for that. Thank you.

1           Let's see. I appreciate you being here today. I do want to ask another  
2 question.

3           I read through the May 7th, 2024 letter to you from Chairman Williams that  
4 accompanied the subpoena. There's a line in there that caught my attention, and I'm  
5 going to read it.

6           In this video, you made allegations about improper conduct at SBA related to this  
7 investigation. I just want to make sure I hear your perspective. And correct me if I'm  
8 wrong because I think you said this. You thought you were on a date, and you did not  
9 make any allegations of misconduct at SBA, correct?

10          Mr. Robinson. Yes, I was thought -- I never made any allegations of misconduct  
11 on any SBA official.

12          Ms. Harrington. Thank you very much.

13          So, again, I really appreciate you being here today. I want to wrap this up just  
14 generally. If we leave here today and Republicans make claim that the administration is  
15 interfering with elections, is that an accurate allegation, based on your knowledge?

16          Mr. Robinson. Based on my knowledge, no.

17          Ms. Harrington. Okay. Thank you very much.

18          Do you have anything you want to add?

19          Ms. Beca-Barragan. No.

20          Ms. Harrington. Okay. Tyler, thank you very much.

21          We're good.

22          Ms. Holmes. We just have a few questions to -- just give us a minute, and then  
23 we'll be done.

24          Off the record.

25          [Discussion off the record.]

1 Ms. Holmes. We can go back on the record.

2 I just want to respond to a couple of the points brought up by the minority and  
3 the exhibits they introduced.

4 As we all saw, there were four events total introduced. One was in one of the  
5 battleground States that we had talked about earlier, which is Florida, which was included  
6 in our original calculation of all of the press releases done by SBA that are publicly  
7 available.

8 Within the battleground States, as I said before, 27 trips to battleground States, 14  
9 of them included a Democrat Member, and only 1 included a Republican.

10 If you add back in all the other States, as the minority did, the total is still quite  
11 stark. The Democrat numbers were invited to 26 out of 73 total events, and Republican  
12 members, only 2 of the party.

13 Moving into your list of things that you believe -- or are asserting today that were  
14 misstatements done during the video. The minority said that you didn't actually make  
15 any allegations in the video. I think we have a fundamental misunderstanding about  
16 what "allegations" means, so I'm just going to clarify what I mean when I say  
17 "allegations."

18 Ms. Grooms. If we could, I just think we might just be using the word  
19 "allegation" differently.

20 Ms. Holmes. Yeah. That's what I was saying, yeah.

21 Ms. Grooms. So if maybe we could just use a word other than "allegation," that  
22 would make it a little more clear.

23 Ms. Holmes. Yes, okay. So I will define what I meant by "allegations" by using  
24 other words, which would be that you made statements in a video about misconduct at  
25 the SBA which you are now denying in person today, which I recognize and I understand,

1 but the statements were, in fact, made and they were made by you.

2 Ms. Sawyer. So can I just ask a clarifying question?

3 Ms. Holmes. Absolutely.

4 Ms. Sawyer. I mean, I think we would all agree that he made statements about  
5 conduct that he has tried to explain or said were misstatements, but I don't know that we  
6 would all agree that every statement was about misconduct. So --

7 Ms. Holmes. That's fine.

8 Ms. Sawyer. -- if we could just have that clarified.

9 Ms. Holmes. Yeah, back on the record. Totally fine. Okay.

10 Ms. Beca-Barragan. And for the record, the definition of "allegation," according  
11 to the dictionary, is a claim or assertion that someone has done something illegal or  
12 wrong, typically one made without proof.

13 Ms. Holmes. Yes, which is how I was using the term, he made allegations  
14 without any backing to them, and that's what we were investigating, was the statements  
15 made without any evidence behind them, right? Okay.

16 BY MS. HOLMES:

17 Q So now that we're done with our grammar lesson, I just have a couple of,  
18 like, final questions for you.

19 You stated on the record earlier that, as far as you were aware, there were no  
20 mixed trips, meaning official and political travel, occurring within your knowledge base  
21 during your tenure at the SBA?

22 A As far as I'm aware.

23 Q Okay. I just wanted to make sure.

24 How is it separated? If there were to be a political event, would that be  
25 something just an entire -- like, does the campaign handle that? Is it completely



1 siphoned off from your scheduling?

2 A Yes. Anything that might be considered, I guess what you call, mixed  
3 travel, is completely separated from my role.

4 Q Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

5 Ms. Grooms. Can we just --

6 [Discussion off the record.]

7 Mr. Robinson. Yeah. And with the political stuff, because I had -- it was not  
8 part of my role, I don't know anything about it.

9 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

10 Mr. Robinson. Yeah, I have no insight to it.

11 BY MS. HOLMES:

12 Q Okay. We talked about earlier the small business boom, and you said you  
13 just kind of heard people saying it around the office. Did you ever hear people saying  
14 around the office that -- talking about battleground States?

15 A No, I did not.

16 Q Did you ever hear anybody talking around the office about campaigning for  
17 President Biden?

18 A No, I have not.

19 Q Did you ever hear anyone around the office talking about campaigning for  
20 Democrat Members of Congress?

21 A To the best of my recollection, no.

22 Q For the trips, as far as you know, are there any transcripts or readouts from  
23 every trip that the Administrator goes on?

24 A Not that I'm aware of.

25 Q Okay. Do you see her speeches beforehand, are they part of the briefing

1 book?

2 A I am emailed a copy.

3 Q Okay.

4 A I generally do not -- I generally do not read them.

5 Q That's okay.

6 A I just put them in the book.

7 Q That's okay. So you're emailed a copy, you add it to the book, and then  
8 hand it to the Administrator?

9 A Generally, yes. There are times when she prints it out on her own and just  
10 takes it on her own.

11 Q Okay. You also mentioned at the beginning of today that you were the  
12 interim director of scheduling or something to that effect?

13 A Yes. There wasn't an official title, but I served as the only person in the  
14 office managing the scheduling inbox.

15 Q Okay. So that means you saw all the requests that come in, and then what  
16 did you do with those requests?

17 A That is part of the scheduling process where I would make a list of all the  
18 requests and get all the details necessary to discuss the invitation with the group I had  
19 mentioned earlier that saw the Administrator's events --

20 Q Okay.

21 A -- and gives a recommendation.

22 Q And in my final hour, we talked about the -- whether or not there was the  
23 existence of an OSC investigation. I'm not going to ask you that question, but I am going  
24 to ask you, do you know the answer to that question, of whether or not there is an  
25 investigation?

1 Ms. Meers. I want to take a pause as agency counsel.

2 Mr. Robinson, I'm instructing you not to answer that question.

3 Mr. Robinson. Okay.

4 Mr. Sempertegui. And for the record, Lauren, as we discussed previously, we will  
5 work with the committee to sort of address that specific question.

6 Ms. Holmes. Okay.

7 Mr. Robinson, I'm not sure you're aware, but Title 5, Section 7211 of the U.S. Code  
8 states the right of employees, individually or collectively, to petition Congress or a  
9 Member of Congress, or to furnish information to either the House of Congress or to a  
10 committee or a member thereof, may not be interfered with or denied.

11 Do you understand?

12 Ms. Grooms. I'm not sure I understand. What -- what --

13 Ms. Holmes. It's the right of an employee to petition Congress -- to furnish  
14 information to Congress.

15 Ms. Grooms. Okay.

16 Mr. Robinson. Yes.

17 BY MS. HOLMES:

18 Q Okay. Title 5, Section 2302 of the U.S. Code states that the department  
19 and/or agency, cannot take or threaten to take personal action against you, including a  
20 charge of your benefits -- a change to your benefits -- sorry -- for any disclosure to  
21 Congress, including to any committee of Congress.

22 Do you understand?

23 A Yes.

24 Q Are you aware that the representatives of the agency do not represent your  
25 interests but instead those of the government?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Are you aware that it's possible your personal interests may diverge from  
3 those of the government?

4 A Yes.

5 Q Are you aware that the discretion whether to answer questions, even if  
6 instructed not to, resides solely with you?

7 A Yes.

8 Q And are you aware that if you refuse to answer any questions today, either  
9 as instructed or otherwise, the committee has authority to compel your testimony?

10 A Yes.

11 Q Okay. So I'm just going to ask one more time. Do you know the answer of  
12 whether or not there is an OSC investigation?

13 Ms. Grooms. Can we pause on this?

14 Ms. Holmes. Yeah. We can go off the record.

15 Ms. Grooms. It does seem like -- let's stay on the record. It seems like what I  
16 had thought that the agreement was that you were going to work this out with OSC.  
17 Clearly, OSC knows whether OSC is conducting an investigation, and that would be the  
18 most appropriate place to ask this question to.

19 It does seem as if we're putting Tyler into the middle of a debate that's not really  
20 involving Tyler. And you just said a number of things about him sort of disagreeing with  
21 and going above and beyond and giving you information, after being instructed by  
22 counsel for the agency not to do so. And I think the -- that puts him in a particularly  
23 uncomfortable situation where I think our preference would be for you to work this out  
24 with agency counsel and with OSC, who obviously can decide whether the -- whatever  
25 OSC is or is not doing is something that OSC feels is appropriate to share with you or not

1 share with you, as opposed to going about it through Tyler.

2 So we would ask that you withdraw the question and proceed in the alternative  
3 process instead of, you know, pressuring Tyler to answer it at this point.

4 We have not had the opportunity, as personal counsel, to consult with OSC about  
5 whether OSC has concerns about Tyler answering this question, if that makes sense.

6 Ms. Holmes. That's fine. Your preference is noted. I'm not going to withdraw  
7 the question. I'm not asking what the answer to whether or not there is an  
8 investigation. I'm just asking if he knows that information. That's it. I'm not going to  
9 ask the followup.

10 Ms. Harrington. This is beyond the scope again.

11 Ms. Holmes. No, it's not.

12 Ms. Harrington. This is beyond the scope --

13 Ms. Holmes. Ellen, you can't make that assertion, and, no, it's not beyond the  
14 scope of the agreement.

15 So you can instruct your client not to answer, and that's fine, and then we can talk  
16 offline, but I'm not going to withdraw the question of whether or not he knows the  
17 answer to the question.

18 That's all -- I'm not going to ask the followup. I will give you my word on that  
19 one. All I want to know is if he knows the answer.

20 Ms. Grooms. Can we take a pause?

21 Ms. Holmes. Yes. We can go off the record.

22 [Discussion off the record.]

23 Ms. Holmes. On the record.

24 Okay. So I'm going to ask again. Do you know the answer to the question of  
25 whether or not there is an active and ongoing OSC investigation at the SBA?

- 1 Mr. Robinson. I know the answer.
- 2 Ms. Holmes. Okay. Thank you.
- 3 We can go off the record.
- 4 [Discussion off the record.]

1

2 [2:06 p.m.]

3 Ms. Holmes. Okay. We're back on the record.

4 The committee recognizes and appreciates that you were here voluntarily today,  
5 Mr. Robinson, and of course all the attorneys in the room, we appreciate your  
6 cooperation and thank you for being here.

7 Ms. Grooms. Thank you.

8 Ms. Holmes. Okay. We're done. Off the record.

9 [Whereupon, at 2:06 p.m., the interview was adjourned.]

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Certificate of Deponent/Interviewee

I have read the foregoing \_\_\_\_ pages, which contain the correct transcript of the answers made by me to the questions therein recorded.

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Witness Name

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Date