

Committee on Financial Services

Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure

Committee on House Administration

Democratic Steering & Policy
Committee

Democratic Caucus; Chair, Committee
on Organization, Study & Review

Chair, Speaker's Task Force on
Ethics Enforcement

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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Michael E. Capuano

8th District, Massachusetts

June 24, 2008

WASHINGTON OFFICE:

1530 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-2108
(202) 225-5111
FAX: (202) 225-9322

DISTRICT OFFICES:

110 FIRST STREET
CAMBRIDGE, MA 02141
(617) 621-6208
FAX: (617) 621-8628

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The Honorable Robert Brady
Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6157

Dear Chairman Brady,

I am writing as Chair of the Congressional Commission on Mailing Standards (Franking Commission). As you are aware, the Franking Commission is currently reviewing the federal laws, House Rules, regulations of the Committee on House Administration (CHA), and the regulations of the Franking Commission as they apply to official communications. Members and staff of the Franking Commission have been meeting informally to discuss various issues that have been brought to the Commission's attention. Recently, we reviewed a matter under the jurisdiction of CHA and I would like to bring several recommendations on this matter to your attention.

As you are aware, current CHA regulations have been interpreted to prohibit Members from posting official content outside of the House.gov domain. Unfortunately, many Members who wish to display video on their websites have found that the existing tools available within the House to do so are not user-friendly or efficient, and that in addition, server storage space within the House is currently insufficient to meet the growing demand for video. The House Leadership and your committee began to examine solutions to this situation last year and the Franking Commission recently engaged in detailed discussions of possible solutions. Specifically, we discussed the ongoing effort to establish designated House "channels" on external sites. This would allow a Member to post video material on a qualifying external website and then embed the video on his or her Member site from this external site. The concept of an "official" external channel has been adopted by other government agencies and it could be available to the House in short order if the relevant CHA regulations and practice are amended. I am pleased to forward recommendations on this matter to CHA for review and consideration.

Members of the Commission support revising the applicable CHA regulations to allow Members to post official video material outside of the House.gov domain. However, I respectfully submit the following recommendations for your review and consideration, should CHA decide to move forward with such a change. I believe that these conditions will help ensure that the House presence on such external sites conforms with acceptable



standards that reflect favorably on the dignity, propriety, and decorum of the House. It is also my understanding that at least one external site and potentially many others have the technology available to meet the following conditions:

- Official content posted on an external domain must be clearly identified as produced by a House office for official purposes, and meet existing content rules and regulations;
- To the maximum extent possible, the official content should not be posted on a website or page where it may appear with commercial or political information or any other information not in compliance with the House's content guidelines.
- Any link from a House website to an external site on which the Member video is hosted must contain an exit notice.
- CHA, the Office of Web Assistance (OWA), or other designated House entity should maintain a list of external sites that meet whatever requirements are established by CHA.

Please note that nothing in these recommendations should be construed as a recommendation to change the current House rules and regulations governing the content of official communications.

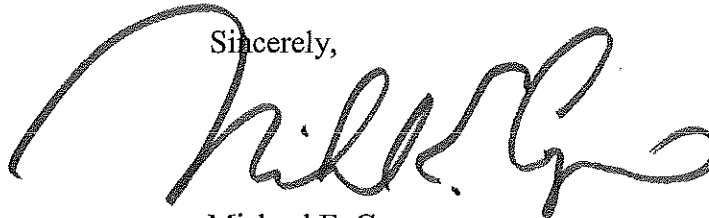
While the above recommendations will help CHA as it seeks to provide House Members with the ability to post official video materials on the Web in an efficient and economical way, further changes to CHA regulations and practice may be necessary to account for the continual emergence of new technologies. I encourage CHA to view these recommendations as the first step in a process towards modernizing the regulations that govern communications of Members.

In addition, I encourage CHA to continue to review the services available through the Office of Web Assistance to determine to what extent OWA has the capability to provide video services to Members within House.

The Committee on House Administration has already demonstrated significant leadership in addressing the demand for these services. I encourage the Committee to proceed forthwith to promulgate such regulations as may be appropriate and look forward to working with you.

As always, thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Capuano'.

Michael E. Capuano
Chair
Congressional Commission on Mailing Standards