

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 30, 2024

Mr. Edward Siskel
Assistant to the President and White House Counsel
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Siskel:

In less than one week, the American people will determine the winner of the 2024 presidential election. They will choose between two candidates: President Donald Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris. President Biden—marred by unpopular policies,¹ scandal,² and apparent cognitive deterioration³—has chosen not to pursue a second term in office. President Biden, however, has continued to play a prominent role in Vice President Harris’s campaign and, indeed, is the most powerful mouthpiece for the Biden-Harris Administration’s policies and views that Ms. Harris presumably seeks to continue under a hypothetical Harris-Walz Administration.⁴

Americans were rightfully insulted, then, when President Biden, seeking to boost Ms. Harris’s presidential campaign, referred to an enormous swath of the country as “floating . . . garbage.” President Biden’s vindictive words were unsurprising, given his previous statements regarding people who choose not to vote for his preferred candidate.⁵ Unsurprising too were the White House’s actions after he said them. Instead of apologizing or clarifying President Biden’s words, the White House instead sought to change them (despite them being recorded on video) by releasing a false transcript of his remarks.⁶ The move is not only craven, but it also appears to be in violation of federal law, including the Presidential Records Act of 1978.⁷

White House staff cannot rewrite the words of the President of the United States to be more politically on message. Though President Biden’s relevance continues to diminish, his words continue to matter, even as they become increasingly divisive and erratic.⁸ We write to

¹ See, e.g., Opinion, Kimberley A. Strassel, *The Biden Problem is Policy*, Wall St. J. (July 11, 2024).

² See, e.g., Opinion, Ross Douthat, *There Is Still a Biden Scandal*, N.Y. Times (Aug. 10, 2024).

³ See, e.g., Ezekiel J. Emanuel, *There Are Exceptionally Sharp Octogenarians. Biden Isn’t One.*, The Atlantic (July 5, 2024).

⁴ See, e.g., James Lynch, *‘Not a Thing That Comes to Mind’: Harris Says She Wouldn’t Do Anything Differently from Biden over Past Four Years*, Nat. Review (Oct. 8, 2024).

⁵ See, e.g., Eric Bradner et al., *Biden: ‘If you have a problem figuring out whether you’re for me or Trump, then you ain’t black*, CNN (May 22, 2020).

⁶ Ewan Palmer, *Joe Biden Transcript of ‘Garbage’ Remarks Raises Eyebrows*, Newsweek (Oct. 30, 2024).

⁷ See Presidential Records Act of 1978, 44 U.S.C. §2201 et seq.; see also Federal Records Act of 1950 44 U.S.C. § 3101 et seq.

⁸ See, e.g., Toluse Olorunnipa, *Biden spurs controversy by saying of Trump, ‘We’ve got to lock him up’*, Wash. Post (Oct. 22, 2024).

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demand the White House retain and preserve all documents and internal communications regarding President Biden's statement and the release of the inaccurate transcript. We also demand that the White House issue a corrected transcript with the accurate words.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Jake Greenberg or Clark Abourisk with the Committee on Oversight and Accountability at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Elise Stefanik
Chairwoman
House Republican Conference



James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

cc: The Honorable Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability