

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2017

Steve A. Linick
Inspector General
Office of Inspector General, US Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Inspector General Linick:

I am deeply troubled by press reports indicating the Department of State has developed taxpayer-funded promotional materials for Mar-a-Lago, a private club owned by the President of the United States, and that those materials have been published around the world by United States embassies. I am writing to request an immediate review into why and how these materials were published as well as a report from your office on the results of that review.

According to a report by the New York Times and further confirmed by my staff, promotional materials for Mar-a-Lago were drafted and published by the website <https://share.america.gov/>.¹ ShareAmerica's website describes it as "the U.S. Department of State's platform for sharing compelling stories and images that spark discussion and debate on important topics like democracy, freedom of expression, innovation, entrepreneurship, education, and the role of civil society."²

After public scrutiny, the promotional materials appear to have been removed and replaced with a brief explanation for their creation. Notwithstanding that explanation or the deletion of the original content, the initial publication appears to have been a clear use of public resources for private gain. Additionally, at least two United States embassies were still promoting the President's private business as of the drafting of this letter.^{3, 4}

Furthermore, it is widely known that the President has not truly divested from his business interests, including his ownership of Mar-a-Lago. Taxpayer-funded promotion for the club by United States embassies around the world raises immense concern over potential gifts and/or influence by foreign governments in violation of Article I, Section 9, Clause 8 of the United States Constitution, otherwise known as the "foreign emoluments clause."

¹ <https://share.america.gov/mar-a-lago-winter-white-house/>

² <https://share.america.gov/about-us/>

³ <https://www.facebook.com/usembassytirana/posts/10154547231765838>

⁴ <https://uk.usembassy.gov/mar-lago-winter-white-house/>

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I request that you investigate the publication and dissemination of these materials with urgency, including whether these actions were taken at the direction of non-career employees, inside or outside of the Department. I look forward to the results of your review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'RWY', is positioned above the printed name.

Ron Wyden
United States Senator