

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 15, 2023

Dear Speaker McCarthy, Chairwoman Stefanik, and Congressional Leadership Fund President Dan Conston:

In light of recent public reporting indicating that each of you had at least some knowledge of the web of lies used by Congressman George Santos to deceive his voters long before they became public, we write to request that you proactively and forthrightly cooperate with all current and future investigations into Mr. Santos, including the investigation by the House Committee on Ethics that Speaker McCarthy confirmed this week.¹ In addition, we urge you to inform the American people about your knowledge of Mr. Santos's web of deceit prior to the election so that the public understands whether and to what extent you were complicit in Mr. Santos's fraud on his voters.

In December, public reporting indicated that multiple Republican insiders were aware of Mr. Santos's alleged inaccuracies and embellishments, and that they were considered a 'running joke.'² A senior Republican leadership aide reportedly told the *New York Post*: "As far as questions about George in general, that was always something that was brought up whenever we talked about this race. It was a running joke at a certain point."³

Yesterday, The *New York Times* published a detailed report expanding upon the degree to which each of you had at least some foreknowledge of Mr. Santos's lies.⁴ Sadly, even now, after eight other Republican members of Congress have called for Mr. Santos to resign, you have refused to make any public comment on Mr. Santos's fraudulent candidacy, nor have you shared with the public your understanding of Mr. Santos's blatant deception and lies prior to the election.

According to the *Times*, in November of 2021, then-candidate Santos commissioned a 'vulnerability study' to identify weaknesses in his candidacy that might have been leveraged by an opposing candidate during the course of a campaign. The analysis revealed that Mr. Santos

¹ Scott Wong, Kate Santaliz, and Kyle Stewart. *McCarthy says embattled Rep. Santos should not be seated on top committees*. NBC News. Jan. 11, 2023.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/mccarthy-says-embattled-rep-santos-not-get-seated-top-committees-rcn-a65295> ("If there is a concern and he has to go through the Ethics, we'll let him move through that....")

² Jon Levine. *House GOP leaders aware of George Santos fabrications: 'A running joke.'* The New York Post. Dec. 24, 2022. <https://nypost.com/2022/12/24/house-gop-leaders-aware-of-george-santos-fabrications/>

³ *Id.*

⁴ Nicholas Fandos. *Santos's Lies Were Known to Some Well-Connected Republicans*. The New York Times. Jan. 13, 2023. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/13/nyregion/george-santos-republicans-lies.html>

had fabricated his educational background, worked for a firm accused of a Ponzi scheme, had multiple evictions and a suspended Florida driver's license, which called into question his residency in New York, as well.⁵ After Mr. Santos refused to withdraw from the race, much of his campaign team resigned.

Worse yet, however, the *Times* determined that Republicans with positions of influence at the highest levels of the party were made aware of Mr. Santos's fabrications at the time they were uncovered by the study. As the *Times* states, this is the most "explicit evidence to date that a small circle of well-connected Republican campaign professionals had indications far earlier than the public" of Mr. Santos's attempt to defraud the voters.⁶

Chairwoman Stefanik was one of Mr. Santos's strongest endorsers and supporters, and it is now almost certain that Ms. Stefanik was aware of Mr. Santos's web of lies long before the election. One of Chairwoman Stefanik's top political aides assisted Mr. Santos's campaign, including by helping Mr. Santos find new staff and vendors after many quit in light of the 'vulnerability' study.⁷ In order for the Ethics Committee to conduct a thorough investigation, and for Congress to ensure its members follow the law, it is imperative that Ms. Stefanik share with the Ethics Committee and the public everything that she and her top aide knew about Mr. Santos's web of deceit.

After Mr. Santos defiantly stayed in the race and hired new campaign vendors, the *Times* report underscores concerns within Speaker McCarthy's orbit. Regrettably, those concerns were not about the fact that Mr. Santos was defrauding the voters, but rather that Mr. Santos's fraud might be uncovered. According to the *Times*, "in the run-up to the 2022 contest, Dan Conston, a close ally of Speaker Kevin McCarthy who leads the Congressional Leadership Fund, the main House Republican super PAC, also confided in lawmakers, donors and other associates that he was worried information would come out exposing Mr. Santos as a fraud."⁸

It is one thing for a candidate such as Mr. Santos to induce voters to support him based on a web of lies. But it is altogether something else if the top levels of Republican leadership knew about Mr. Santos's lies during the campaign and chose to be complicit. Investigators examining Mr. Santos's conduct must understand the entire web of deceit, and it is therefore essential that you cooperate fully and forthrightly with those investigations.

The American people also have a right to know whether Republican leadership, including each of you, was complicit in perpetrating this fraud on the voters. We therefore call upon you to explain to the public what you knew about Mr. Santos's lies and when you knew it.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

Speaker McCarthy has long been a forceful advocate for transparency in our election process. On November 5, 2020, Mr. McCarthy tweeted, “Americans demand TRANSPARENCY in our election process now!”⁹ We agree. We therefore hope that you will lead by example and be transparent about your knowledge of Mr. Santos’s web of lies. The American people deserve nothing less than the complete truth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Goldman'.

Dan Goldman
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ritchie Torres'.

Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress

⁹ Kevin McCarthy [@SpeakerMcCarthy]. “*Americans demand TRANSPARENCY in our election process now!*” Twitter. Nov. 5, 2020.
<https://twitter.com/SpeakerMcCarthy/status/1324404567371644930?s=20&t=c02HKejkKZXpyuOXbfkHlw>