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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

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COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION
IN EUROPE (U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

December 10, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-107, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Minority Whip
U.S. Senate
S-321, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jim Clyburn
Majority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
H-329, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, Whip Clyburn, Leader Schumer and Whip Durbin,

As you continue negotiations for an emergency funding package, I urge you to include language prohibiting the President's name from appearing on a second round of stimulus checks. This is consistent with language passed in the Heroes Act on May 15, 2020 and would prevent confusion, misinformation and potential legal violations concerning these payments.

As our nation dipped into the worst recession since the Great Depression, the economic impact payments authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act provided vital assistance to hundreds of millions of Americans. However, in an overtly political and unprecedented move, the President

had his signature printed on the payments. While he was not legally able to sign the checks, his signature was included in the payments' "memo" section. This was the first time in history that a President's name appeared on an IRS disbursement check, whether it was refund checks or other stimulus checks that have been mailed during past economic crises.

Besides increasing confusion and misinformation about the origin of the checks, this action likely constituted a criminal violation of the Hatch Act. It is illegal for any elected official to use government employees and property to promote their own reelection. By having his signature appear on the checks, the President blatantly used taxpayer dollars for his own publicity in the middle of the 2020 presidential campaign. This kind of self-serving, self-promoting behavior cannot be allowed ever again.

To prevent this President or future Presidents from repeating this unethical act, I have introduced H.R. 8448, which would prohibit certain signatures on checks and notices issued by the Department of the Treasury. In keeping with my bill and with the Heroes Act, I urge you to include language in Congress' emergency funding bill prohibiting the President's name from appearing on future stimulus payments.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Cohen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

