



# FACT

FOUNDATION FOR  
ACCOUNTABILITY  
AND CIVIC TRUST

February 4, 2026

Omar Ashmawy  
Chief Counsel  
Office of Congressional Conduct  
U.S. House of Representatives  
P.O. Box 895  
Washington, DC 20515-0895

Email: [conduct@mail.house.gov](mailto:conduct@mail.house.gov)

RE: Rep. Derek Tran (CA)

Dear Mr. Ashmawy,

The Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust (FACT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting accountability, ethics, and transparency in government and civic arenas. We request the Office of Congressional Conduct immediately investigate whether Representative Derek Tran violated House ethics rules by using the Official House Seal for campaign fundraising.

Recently, Rep. Tran sent out a fundraising email (see below) that directly used the official Seal of the U.S. House of Representatives to make a campaign contribution request. In Tran's campaign email, he showed a picture of his sneakers, which featured the House Seal, and said: "So here's the ask: will you help me keep these sneakers on the House floor? With my FEC deadline coming up, chip in \$3 today and let's make sure they keep walking the halls of Congress." He also provided links for making a campaign contribution of higher dollar amounts.

The Official House Seal is government property and Members cannot use it for anything other than official House business—and they absolutely cannot use it for campaign fundraising. Several laws apply to the House Seal. First, under 18 U.S.C. section 713(a) it is illegal to display the Official House Seal on numerous written documents with the intent to convey government approval. Under section 713(d) it is illegal to use or reproduce the Official House Seal unless it is

for official use of the United States government.<sup>1</sup> The House Ethics Manual reiterates that (1) Members are prohibited from using the Official House Seal for campaign or political purposes, including the solicitation of funds, and (2) federal criminal code 18 U.S.C. section 713 applies to Members usage of the House Seal.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the Ethics Committee explains that Members cannot use official government property to fundraise, which includes the House Seal, as well as photos taken on the House floor or in House buildings.<sup>3</sup> Finally, Members are prohibited from using any official government resource, including the House Seal and photographs taken in government buildings, for campaign or political purposes.<sup>4</sup> In this case, the photo used for the campaign solicitation may very well have been taken on government property and, regardless, the House Seal was certainly used for campaign fundraising.

The law is quite clear: Members cannot use official government resources, and particularly the official House Seal, for anything other than official government business. Under the criminal code, reproducing the House Seal on shoes for personal or political purposes is not permitted, and using it for political fundraising purposes is absolutely forbidden. There is no doubt what occurred here. The law is plainly written and there is no excuse for violating it. Not only does use of the official House Seal violate the law, but it implies a government endorsement of political fundraising activity. This type of violation simply cannot be permitted to happen

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<sup>1</sup> Under 18 U.S.C. section 713 states:

“(a) Whoever knowingly displays any printed or other likeness of the great seal of the United States, or of the seals of the President or the Vice President of the United States, or the seal of the United States Senate, or the seal of the United States House of Representatives, or the seal of the United States Congress, or any facsimile thereof, in, or in connection with, any advertisement, poster, circular, book, pamphlet, or other publication, public meeting, play, motion picture, telecast, or other production, or on any building, monument, or stationery, for the purpose of conveying, or in a manner reasonably calculated to convey, a false impression of sponsorship or approval by the Government of the United States or by any department, agency, or instrumentality thereof, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.

....

(d) Whoever, except as directed by the United States House of Representatives, or the Clerk of the House of Representatives on its behalf, knowingly **uses**, manufactures, **reproduces**, sells or purchases for resale, either separately or **appended to any article manufactured** or sold, **any likeness of the seal of the United States House of Representatives**, or any substantial part thereof, except for manufacture or sale of the article for the official use of the Government of the United States, shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than six months, or both.”

<sup>2</sup> House Ethics Manual, <https://ethics.house.gov/manual/other-applicable-laws-rules-and-standards-of-conduct/> (2022 Ed.).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. House of Reps. Committee on Ethics, Memorandum: Member, Officer, and Employee Participating in Fundraising Activities (May 2, 2019), available at: <https://ethics.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Solicitation-Pink-Sheet-FINAL-2.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Federal law states that “appropriations shall be applied only to the objects for which the appropriations were made except as otherwise provided by law.” 31 U.S.C. sec. 1301(a); U.S. House of Reps Comm. on Ethics, *House Ethics Manual*, at 133 (Dec. 2022 Print), available at: <https://ethics.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Dec-2022-House-Ethics-Manual-website-version.pdf> (official House resources “may not be used for campaign or political purposes”); Report of the Comm. on Ethics, *In re Lujan*, Aug. 1, 2017, at 13 (stating a Member is prohibited from using a still image or photograph of House floor proceedings for political purposes).

without repercussion. Thus, we request the Office of Congressional Conduct investigate Rep. Tran and impose appropriate sanctions.

To the best of my knowledge and ability, all evidence submitted was not obtained in violation of any law, rule, or regulation. Further, I am aware that the False Statements Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1001, applies to information submitted to the Office of Congressional Conduct.

Sincerely,

/s/Kendra Arnold

Kendra Arnold

Executive Director

Foundation for Accountability & Civic Trust

Email Exhibit:



[So here's the ask: will you help me keep these sneakers on the House floor? With my FEC deadline coming up, chip in \\$3 today and let's make sure they keep walking the halls of Congress.](#)

If you've saved your payment information with ActBlue Express, your donation will go through immediately:

[Chip in \\$10 Now](#)

[Chip in \\$35 Now](#)

[Chip in \\$50 Now](#)

[Chip in \\$100 Now](#)

[Chip in \\$250 Now](#)

[Another amount](#)

Thank you,

Derek



[www.derektranforcongress.com](http://www.derektranforcongress.com)

Use of Derek Tran's military rank, job titles, and photographs in uniform does not imply endorsement by the Dept. of Defense or U.S. Army.

Derek Tran is a veteran, consumer rights attorney, and Member of Congress representing California's 45th District. To support Derek's campaign [consider making a grassroots contribution here.](#)

We'd hate to see you go, but you can click here if you'd like to [unsubscribe](#). If you'd like to receive fewer emails, please click [here](#)

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