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One Hundred Eighteenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
1309 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-6157
(202) 225-8281 | CHA.HOUSE.GOV

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June 3, 2024

Mr. Jay O. Rothman
Universities of Wisconsin
1720 Van Hise Hall
1220 Linden Dr.
Madison, WI 53706

Dear President Rothman:

As you know, I serve as Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on House Administration, which has broad oversight of our nation's federal elections. I am also a proud alumnus of the University of Wisconsin and a former member of the Board of Regents.

I believe we share the goal of encouraging Americans to vote. However, I hope we also share the view that federal dollars should never be used in a partisan manner to achieve this goal. In recent years there have been allegations that some universities around the country have misused taxpayer funds to support partisan election efforts. Please join me in reaffirming that this will not happen at the Universities of Wisconsin.

I am writing to enlist your support going forward to ensure that the Universities maintain the highest standards of a public institution by avoiding any appearance of partisanship. I am sure you would agree that it should not be the prerogative of a public institution that receives funding from American taxpayers to lead partisan "get out the vote" (GOTV) activities or to enlist the participation of self-identified partisan advocacy groups for voter registration drives.

When Congress passed the Help America Vote Act of 2002 ("HAVA") it specifically prohibited the use of those funds to support partisan voter registration drives. Similarly, the use of work-study funds for partisan purposes communicates to the public that their taxes are being used for partisan advocacy. The use of outside organizations with their own built-in political viewpoints has drawn considerable negative attention.

As we head into another election season, I ask for your assistance in guiding the Universities in a direction that avoids these pitfalls this year. I am also seeking your assistance in determining whether any federal funding sources, such as work-study programs, are being used in voter registration drives. These actions will help ensure that the Universities of Wisconsin will not use federal funding to support partisan GOTV efforts.

Making it easy to vote should not be done in partnership with partisan groups or in a biased manner that undermines the taxpayer's confidence in a public entity like the Universities of Wisconsin.

Public universities using taxpayer dollars to focus on registering voters that favor one political party and then invite outside partisan groups to assist is cause for alarm. Thus, I ask that you please review whether any Universities in your system have partnered with any organization that sullies the traditional goal of a public educational institution.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of these matters.

Please send your response to me at ____ or to my General Counsel, March Bell at March.Bell@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Steil". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration

cc: Dr. Lynn Akey, Chancellor, UW-Parkside