



January 3, 2023

Committee on Ethics  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1015 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Conduct by Rep. George Santos that fails to “reflect creditably” on the House

Dear Chair and Ranking Member:

Representative-elect George Santos (R-NY3) is due to be sworn in today as a first-term Member of the House of Representatives.

The voters of the 3rd Congressional District of New York, however, did not elect the person who is going to be sworn in. They elected a fictional creation of Santos that did not and does not exist. Rep. Santos did not, as he now says, “embellish” his life story. He invented a life story out of whole cloth — an apparently unprecedented act of deception by a Member of Congress that constitutes nothing short of a fraud on the electorate of his district.

The citizens of New York’s 3rd Congressional District are entitled to be represented by a real person that they chose in an election, not by a fictional person presented to them during the campaign who is no more than a figment of Santos’ imagination. The House Ethics Committee and Members of the House have the duty and responsibility to the House of Representatives as an institution to provide the citizens of New York’s 3rd Congressional District with that right.

Rule 14 of the Ethics Committee Rules states that the Ethics Committee has the authority to undertake an investigation of any matter “on its own initiative.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Rule 14. Committee Authority to Investigate—General Policy (a) Pursuant to clause 3(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee may exercise its investigative authority when: (1) information offered as a complaint, in writing and under oath, by a Member of the House of Representatives is transmitted directly to the Committee; (2) information offered as a complaint, in writing and under oath, by an individual not a Member of the House is transmitted to the Committee, provided that a Member of the House certifies in writing that such Member believes the information is submitted in good faith and warrants the review and consideration of the Committee; (3) *the Committee, on its own initiative, undertakes an investigation ...*” (emphasis added). *Rules, Committee on Ethics* (2021).

Democracy 21 calls on the Ethics Committee to expeditiously and “on its own initiative” conduct an investigation of Rep. George Santos.

Clause 1 of Rule XXIII of the “Code of Official Conduct” of the Rules of the House of Representatives provides that a Member of the House “shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House.”<sup>2</sup>

An expeditious investigation of Rep. Santos will show beyond any reasonable doubt that because of his duplicitous campaign and his egregious, massive deception of the voters of the 3rd Congressional District in New York, Rep. Santos’ continued service as a Member fails “to reflect creditably” on the House.

Article I, section 5 of the United States Constitution provides the House with authority to “punish its Members for disorderly Behavior, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member.”

Rule 24 of the Rules of the Committee on Ethics provides the sanctions that the Committee may recommend for a Member, including “expulsion from the House of Representatives.”<sup>3</sup>

Democracy 21 believes that, based on the public record already in existence, an expeditious investigation by the Committee will lead to the conclusion that the Committee should recommend that the House act to expel Rep. Santos from the House of Representatives.

We further believe that the House should act to expel Rep. Santos.

This would allow the voters of the 3rd Congressional District of New York an opportunity to elect a real Representative, not a fictional creation that bears little resemblance to the person who is currently serving as their Representative.

#### Statement of Published Reports

Recent news stories have reported that Rep. George Santos, who was elected in the November 2022 election to serve as the Representative for the 3rd Congressional District in New York, made multiple and repeated statements about his personal background that were lies and serious

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<sup>2</sup> Rule XXIII, clause 1 reads in full: “A Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, officer, or employee of the House shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House.” *Rules of the House of Representatives* (2021).

<sup>3</sup> Rule 24 provides in part: “The Committee may also, by majority vote, adopt a motion to issue a Letter of Reproval or take other appropriate Committee action. (d) If the Committee determines a Letter of Reproval constitutes sufficient action, the Committee shall include any such letter as a part of its report to the House of Representatives. (e) With respect to any proved counts against a Member of the House of Representatives, the Committee may recommend to the House one or more of the following sanctions: (1) *Expulsion from the House of Representatives*. (2) Censure. (3) Reprimand. (4) Fine.” (emphasis added). *Rules, Committee on Ethics* (2021).

distortions of the truth during his campaign. In addressing these charges, Rep. Santos has since admitted that many of the statements he made to voters about his background were false or, as he subsequently described it, “embellish[ed].”<sup>4</sup>

The false statements and misrepresentations about his background that Rep. Santos made during his campaign were so pervasive that voters essentially elected a different person than the one who was just sworn into office. This was no run-of-the-mill matter of a candidate exaggerating favorable aspects of his résumé. Here, Rep. Santos fabricated facts about his educational background, his employment background, his heritage, and his experience.

In effect, Santos presented to the electorate an almost entirely fictional and falsified persona of who he was, and thereby duped the voters into electing that fabricated person.

*The New York Times* first reported on allegations of false statements by Rep. Santos in a story published on December 19, 2022.<sup>5</sup> According to that report, Rep. Santos misrepresented his educational background, his employment background, and his personal financial background:

[A] New York Times review of public documents and court filings from the United States and Brazil, as well as various attempts to verify claims that Mr. Santos, 34, made on the campaign trail, calls into question key parts of the résumé that he sold to voters.

Citigroup and Goldman Sachs, the marquee Wall Street firms on Mr. Santos’s campaign biography, told *The Times* they had no record of his ever working there. Officials at Baruch College, which Mr. Santos has said he graduated from in 2010, could find no record of anyone matching his name and date of birth graduating that year.

There was also little evidence that his animal rescue group, Friends of Pets United, was, as Mr. Santos claimed, a tax-exempt organization: The Internal Revenue Service could locate no record of a registered charity with that name.

*The Times* report further states:

After he said he graduated from college, Mr. Santos began working at Citigroup, eventually becoming “an associate asset manager” in the company’s real estate division, according to a version of his biography that was on his campaign site as recently as April.

A spokeswoman for Citigroup, Danielle Romero-Apsilos, said the company could not confirm Mr. Santos’s employment. She also said she was unfamiliar with Mr.

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<sup>4</sup> V. Nava and C. Campanile, “Liar Rep.-elect George Santos admits fabricating key details of his bio,” *New York Post* (Dec. 26, 2022).

<sup>5</sup> G. Ashford and M. Gold, “Who Is Rep.-Elect George Santos? His Résumé May Be Largely Fiction,” *The New York Times* (Dec. 19, 2022).

Santos's self-described job title and noted that Citi had sold off its asset management operations in 2005.

In addition, *The Times* reported:

He has also asserted that his professional life had intersected with tragedy: He said in an interview on WNYC that his company, which he did not identify, "lost four employees" at the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando in June 2016. But a *Times* review of news coverage and obituaries found that none of the 49 victims appear to have worked at the various firms named in his biography.

A subsequent report in *The New York Times* published on December 26, 2022<sup>6</sup> stated:

Ending a weeklong silence, Representative-elect George Santos admitted on Monday to a sizable list of falsehoods about his professional background, educational history and property ownership[. ...]

Mr. Santos admitted to lying about graduating from college and making misleading claims that he worked for Citigroup or Goldman Sachs. He once said he had a family-owned real estate portfolio of 13 properties; on Monday, he admitted he was not a landlord.

Rep. Santos denied that he had misled voters by describing himself as Jewish, instead asserting that he had described himself as "Jew-ish":

Mr. Santos also denounced reporting by both CNN and *The Forward*, a Jewish publication, that he may have misled voters about his account of his Jewish ancestry, including that his maternal grandparents were born in Europe and emigrated to Brazil during the Holocaust.

"I never claimed to be Jewish," Mr. Santos told *The Post*. "I am Catholic. Because I learned my maternal family had a Jewish background, I said I was 'Jew-ish.'"

With regard to his educational background, *The Times* reported:

Over the course of his campaigns, Mr. Santos claimed to have graduated from Baruch College in 2010 before working at Citigroup and, eventually, Goldman Sachs. A biography on the National Republican Congressional Committee website said he had attended both Baruch and New York University and received degrees in finance and economics.

But the colleges and companies could not locate records to verify his claims when contacted by *The Times*.

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<sup>6</sup> M. Gold and G. Ashford, "George Santos Admits to Lying About College and Work History," *The New York Times* (Dec. 26, 2022).

In Monday’s interview, Mr. Santos admitted to The Post that he had not graduated from Baruch College or any college.

“I didn’t graduate from any institution of higher learning. I’m embarrassed and sorry for having embellished my résumé,” he said, later adding: “We do stupid things in life.”

*The Times* report on December 26 also stated:

He also admitted that he never worked directly for Goldman Sachs or Citigroup, blaming a “poor choice of words” for creating the impression that he had.

Past statements of Mr. Santos are relatively clear however: An archived version of Mr. Santos’s former campaign website preserved by the Internet Archive’s Wayback Machine says he “began working at Citigroup as an associate and quickly advanced to become an associate asset manager in the real asset division of the firm.”

Instead, he told The Post on Monday, he dealt with both firms through his work at another company, LinkBridge Investors, which connects investors with potential clients. LinkBridge, he said, had “limited partnerships” with the two Wall Street firms.

The Times was able to confirm Mr. Santos’s employment at LinkBridge. But in a version of his campaign biography posted as recently as April, Mr. Santos suggested that he had started his career on Wall Street at Citigroup and that he was at Goldman Sachs briefly before his time at LinkBridge.

*The Times* also reported that Rep. Santos admitted that he made misrepresentations about property ownership:

Mr. Santos also admitted that he was not, as he claimed last year on Twitter, a landlord who makes significant income from 13 properties owned by him and his family.

“George Santos does not own any properties,” he told The Post, even though a financial disclosure he filed with the House in September said he owned an apartment in Rio de Janeiro.

In a report published on December 27, 2022<sup>7</sup>, *The New York Times* summarizes the various fabrications Rep. Santos has made about his background:

**Mr. Santos did not work where he said he did.**

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<sup>7</sup> D. Rubinstein, “George Santos: What We Know and Don’t Know About the Representative-Elect,” *The New York Times* (Dec. 27, 2022).

Over the course of his two campaigns for Congress, the first of which was unsuccessful, Mr. Santos cast himself as an accomplished veteran of Wall Street, with work experience at both Citigroup, where he said he was “an associate asset manager,” and at Goldman Sachs. Both firms told The Times that they had no record of Mr. Santos’s ever working for them.

In recent interviews, Mr. Santos has claimed that he did not actually work for those companies, but rather with them, when he was employed at a company called LinkBridge Investors, which says it connects fund managers with investors.

Mr. Santos told The New York Post that he had merely used a “poor choice of words.”

**Mr. Santos did not graduate from the schools he said he had.**

Mr. Santos has said he graduated from Baruch College in Manhattan with a bachelor’s degree in economics and finance. A biography on the website of the House Republicans’ campaign committee said he had also studied at N.Y.U. But neither college could find records verifying those claims, and in his interview with The Post, Mr. Santos admitted that he had lied about his education.

“I didn’t graduate from any institution of higher learning,” he told the newspaper. “I’m embarrassed and sorry for having embellished my résumé.”

**Mr. Santos says he is not Jewish, so much as “Jew-ish.”**

Mr. Santos has said that his mother was born in Brazil to immigrants who “fled Jewish persecution in Ukraine, settled in Belgium and again fled persecution during WW II.” And he has identified as both Catholic and as a nonobservant Jew.

But citing genealogy records and Brazilian records, both The Forward, a Jewish publication, and CNN have reported that Mr. Santos’s maternal grandparents appear to have been born in Brazil before World War II. Mr. Santos has responded to those revelations by modifying his story ever so slightly.

“I always joke, I’m Catholic, but I’m also Jew-ish — as in ‘ish,’” he told City & State. “I grew up fully aware that my grandparents were Jewish, came from a Jewish family, and they were refugees to Brazil. And that was always the story I grew up with, and I’ve always known it very well.”

**Mr. Santos amends story on Pulse nightclub shooting.**

After he won election, Mr. Santos, who says he is gay, claimed to have “lost four employees” at the 2016 shooting at Pulse, a gay club in Orlando, a claim for which The Times could find no evidence.

During an interview on WABC radio, Mr. Santos said that those “four employees” did not actually work for his Florida company. Rather, those four individuals were in the process of being hired, he said.

“We did lose four people that were going to be coming to work for the company that I was starting up in Orlando,” he said.

[...]

**Mr. Santos does not own 13 properties.**

During his most recent congressional campaign, Mr. Santos cast himself and his family as the owners of 13 properties. He also suggested he was a beleaguered landlord whose tenants were unjustly withholding rent.

On Monday, he said his family owns property, but he does not.

“George Santos does not own any properties,” he told The Post.

Request for Investigation

Rep. Santos created a false persona for the voters of his congressional district. As he has now admitted after investigative reports of his background were published, he made misrepresentations about his educational background, his work history, his religious background, his assets, and other matters. This is a matter that directly reflects on the integrity of the House of Representatives as an institution and on the credibility of its Members.

House Members and staff are subject to the “most comprehensive provision” of the Code of Official Conduct, which is the requirement in clause 1 of House Rule XXIII that Members shall conduct themselves “at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House.”<sup>8</sup>

The House Ethics Manual cites 11 prior instances in which the Ethics Committee has invoked this provision in investigating or disciplining Members.<sup>9</sup> These prior matters include: failing to report campaign contributions and making false statements in connection with the Korean Influence Investigation; inflating the salaries of congressional employees in order to enable them to pay the Member’s personal, political, or congressional expenses; accepting gifts from persons with an interest in legislation in violation of the gift rule; engaging in sexual relationships with House pages; writing a misleading memorandum that could have influenced a personal

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<sup>8</sup> *House Ethics Manual* (2022) at 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 14-16.

associate's probation as well as arranging for improper administrative dismissal of parking tickets, and making statements "that impugned the reputation of the House."

In many of these examples, questions of dishonesty are involved, and in all of them the Members' actions brought discredit on the House and undermined public confidence in the integrity of the House as an institution. The same discredit would be brought upon the House if Rep. Santos is permitted to serve in the House after attaining his office through knowing duplicity and what appears to be massive, willful deception of the voters.

This matter goes to important interests in the integrity of the House and its Members that are protected by clause 1 of House Rule XXIII.

We request that the House Ethics Committee exercise direct jurisdiction over this matter on an expedited basis under its inherent Rule 14 authority to conduct investigations "on its own initiative."

The Committee should expeditiously investigate whether Rep. Santos massively deceived voters about his background to such an extent that he attained election to the House under false pretenses and, by serving as a Member, would thereby bring discredit on the House in violation of clause 1 of Rule XXIII of House Rules.

Democracy 21 believes the record makes clear that Rep. Santos engaged in pervasive and egregious misrepresentation of his background during the campaign and thereby was elected to the House under massive false pretenses.

Democracy 21 calls on the Committee to recommend to the House, under Rule 24 of the Committee Rules, that Rep. Santos be expelled.

Submitted by,



Fred Wertheimer  
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