

# Maxine Waters: 'No Benefit, No Case'

*Here are excerpted remarks from Rep. Maxine Waters press conference Aug. 13. (We recommend watching the video at <http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/245040-1>. Subheads have been added.)*

I want to thank you for all being here today, especially on a Friday during recess.

The press and public have now had an opportunity to read the statement of alleged violation and have shown a lot of interest in the ethics matter that is now pending before the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct.

I am, indeed, eager to be able to have an opportunity to present my case, and that is why I have requested that the Standards Committee schedule a hearing as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, the committee has not yet specified a date for a hearing on this matter, and, given the Congressional schedule, it is possible that no hearing would be held for months, even after the November elections.

Such a delay is unacceptable, considering the investigation has dragged out for almost one year. It does not provide due process. It prevents my constituents and the American public from getting answers, and it delays me from being able to respond to the charges spelled out in the SAV [Statement of Alleged Violation].

I'm pleased that the committee released the SAV and related documents earlier this week, as I had insisted after waiving my right to have the SAV remain private until the adjudicatory hearing. I've arranged this press conference to present my facts in the case and to clear up ambiguities and misinformation.

I recognize the transparency that I'm providing may not eliminate an adjudicatory hearing. To reiterate, I am, in fact, anxious to share these facts with you and the public, because I have not violated any House rules.

I fully disclosed all of my financial information, as requested by House rules, and, in fact, went above and

beyond what was required by repeatedly disclosing my and my husband's financial interests during Financial Services Committee hearings. Neither my staff nor I engaged in any improper behavior, and we did not influence anyone, and we did not gain any benefit.

We are here today because I believe my actions and the allegations against me are not easily understood. Today I want to be absolutely clear about one thing: This case is not just about me. This case is about access. It's about access for those who are not heard by the decision makers, whether it's having their questions answered or their concerns addressed.

## **Access for Minority-, Women-Owned Businesses**

For the past 34 years I've served in elective office, both at the state and national level, and I've made one of my top priorities opening doors and providing access for small, minority- and women-owned businesses.

In fact, my advocacy and assistance in providing access for the National Bankers Association is why we're here today. The National Bankers Association consists of 103 minority banks, and I have worked with this association and their concerns for many years. I've spoken at their conventions on many occasions. I have participated in hearings about their issues, and I've worked with our federal agencies on their behalf, including the Treasury Department, FDIC, and Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac.

My telephone call to then-Secretary of the Treasury Hank Paulson during the worst economic crisis this nation has faced in 80 years was to provide access to the National Bankers Association, which was concerned about the fact that Treasury had placed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac into conservatorship.

It was represented to me that many minority banks had over-leveraged their capital in Fannie and Freddie, and the association wished to know whether or not their members' capital was lost, or if the government was responsible for protecting the capital that they had invested in preferred stock.

They had attempted to get a meeting with the Treasury Department, but had received no response. And so they sought me out to assist them in setting up a meeting.

The question at this point should not be why I called Secretary Paulson, but why I had to. The question at this point should be why a trade association representing over 100 minority banks could not get a meeting at the height of the crisis.



*Rep. Maxine Waters delivers her response to the ethics charges against her, in Washington, D.C. Aug. 13.*

When I contacted the Treasury Secretary, I did not suggest any solution to the problem of the National Bankers Association; I did not ask for any favors from the National Bankers Association; I did not ask for a meeting for any individual banks, including OneUnited Bank; I did not suggest who would be participants in that meeting.

I did not attend that meeting. And there was no such thing as the Troubled Asset Relief Program, known as TARP, at that time.

There has been a great deal of confusion over a conversation I had with the Financial Services chairman, Barney Frank. The conversation I had with Chairman Frank was a conversation several weeks after this meeting had taken place and after the TARP program had been announced.

OneUnited Bank was now raising questions about assistance from TARP because my office's assistance to the National Bankers Association was strictly to provide access for a discussion about the impact of the financial crisis on small and minority banks broadly; and because there was no TARP program at the time of the meeting. I did not wish to get involved with OneUnited Bank about any individual assistance or about this new TARP program.

Because my husband had once served on the board of OneUnited Bank and still held investments there, I felt I should seek assistance from Chairman Frank, a representative from the state where the bank was head-

quartered, and someone with a record of commitment to the health of minority banks.

It's also important to note that no government agency or their representatives had ever said that I requested any special assistance or compensation for anyone or any institution, or that I influenced the TARP process in any way.

### **It Was Not About OneUnited Bank**

There has also been a question about whether or not I instructed my staff not to get involved with OneUnited Bank, and their interest in accessing TARP funds.

My staff had only been involved in understanding the impact of the financial crisis on small and minority banks broadly, and assisting in setting up the meeting with the Treasury Department for, again—again—the National Bankers Association.

I told my chief of staff that I had informed Chairman Frank about OneUnited Bank's interest, that we were only concerned about small and minority banks broadly, that Chairman Frank would evaluate OneUnited's issue and make a decision about how to proceed.

And given the e-mails that the committee has offered as their evidence, we communicated with each other clearly.

So it's not just about us. It's about those who lack access.

I was honored to serve on the conference committee of the Wall Street reforms and Consumer Protection Act. I'm happy to say that much of the legislation I authored—access for women and minority rights, for shareholders, a more accountable consumer, financial protection bureau, and assistance for struggling and unemployed homeowners—were included in the final legislation that was signed by President Obama.

I'm particularly proud of the Offices of Minority and Women Inclusion that will be set up at the federal government's financial institutions, such as the FDIC. All of these agencies, continuing with my work about access, will now have these Offices of Minority and Women Inclusion.

Hear me clearly: Because of the need for access and the work that I have done over many years, I have now opened up new opportunities by creating the Offices of Minority and Women Inclusion at the FDIC, the Treasury Department, the Federal Reserve, among others, to

deal with the historic lack of access that minority and women individuals and institutions have had in hiring, decision-making, contracting, and procurement opportunities.

And over the past year, I, and nine other Congressional Black Caucus members on the Financial Services Committee, have been meeting with the National Bankers Association, the National Newspaper Publishers Association, the National Association of Black-Owned Broadcasters, the National Association of Minority Automobile Dealers, the National Association of Securities Professionals, and the National Bar Association, among others, discussing the plight of minority businesses, where lack of access to capital and the lack of support from their government in banking, advertising and consulting contracts.

Access is key to understanding the scope of this case. This case is not just about them. This case is about fairness. The fact that the Investigative Subcommittee ignored or disregarded key pieces of exculpatory evidence crucial to my case is extremely troubling.

A truly robust investigatory process would have taken all the available evidence into consideration. I believe that if this had been done, we would not be here today.

Fairness is also key to understanding the scope of this case. The case is not just about that. The case is also about my constituents and the American people. I have truly been touched by the outpouring of support from my constituents in Los Angeles, and from friends in places like Louisiana, Texas, Missouri, New York, Illinois, Florida, and even from abroad.

I know the way that the American people view Congress. They hear talk of partisanship, of power, of money, of influence. For Congressional critics, it's easy to see a report of an ethics case and completely wash your hands of it all. But my constituents and supporters have seen the many inaccurate accusatory portrayals of my work, and they know me better than that. And they have encouraged me to fight.

I admit, there are some who do not believe in my philosophy or my methods. But no one should question my devotion to public service.

Therefore, I'm asking us all to pause for a moment, set aside our cynicism, and consider two things—the facts of the case and my life's work in trying to provide access to those who have been denied.

These two things will provide context for my constituents and your judgment. My constituents demand that I stand up for the values they elected me to represent.

In sum: No benefit, no improper action, no failure to disclose, no one influenced, no case.