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United States Senate

HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

September 11, 2020

The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz **Inspector General** U.S. Department of Justice 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20530-0001

Dear Inspector General Horowitz:

According to recent reports, cell phones belonging to "multiple people on then-Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigative team were 'wiped' for various reasons during [the Russia investigation]." Records indicate that at least 15 phones were wiped for various reasons including, forgotten passwords, screen damage, deletion, and device misplacement.² According to one article, these incidents occurred "before the DOJ's Office of Inspector General (OIG) could review the devices."3

These reports are troubling and raise concerns about record retention and transparency. Therefore, I respectfully request that your office open an investigation into this matter to determine what, why, and how information was wiped, whether any wrongdoing occurred, and who these devices belonged to.

Further, I request you provide the following information:

- 1. When and how was your office made aware of this matter?
- 2. What, if any, steps did your office take to confirm whether information on these phones had been wiped?
- 3. Did these phones have text message capabilities?
- 4. Does your office have the capability to retrieve the information from these phones?

Please provide responses to these questions as soon as possible but no later than September 18, 2020.

¹ Morgan Phillips, DOJ records show members of Mueller's team 'wiped' phones during Trump probe, Fox News, Sept. 10, 2020, https://www.foxnews.com/politics/doj-records-mueller-team-wiped-phones.

² *Id*.

 $^{^3}$ Id.

Thank you in advance for your assistance on this matter. Should you have any questions about these requests please contact Brian Downey or Scott Wittmann of my Committee staff at (202) 224-4571.

Sincerely,

Ron Johnson

cc: The Honorable Gary Peters Ranking Member

The Honorable William P. Barr Attorney General

The Honorable Christopher A. Wray Director