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May 20, 2024

Dr. Terry Babcock-Lumish  
Executive Secretary  
The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation  
712 Jackson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Dr. Babcock-Lumish:

We were troubled to see a recent report indicating that you select Truman Scholarship winners who favor liberal causes over conservative causes by a ratio of over 10 to 1.<sup>1</sup>

Between 2021 and 2023, the Truman Foundation selected 182 Truman winners. Yet, despite the Truman Foundation's claims that it "supports scholars from a wide range of perspectives, interests, and geographic areas,"<sup>2</sup> just six recipients espoused interest in a cause traditionally considered conservative-leaning. Not a single winner professed interest in causes such as protecting the rights of the unborn or defending the Second Amendment. By contrast, the Foundation selected at least 74 winners professing interest in a progressive cause.

We are alarmed that an allegedly non-partisan award displays such a stark partisan tilt. As you are aware, the Truman Foundation was established by Congress and is funded by taxpayers for the purpose of awarding "scholarships to persons who demonstrate outstanding potential for and who plan to pursue a career in public service."<sup>3</sup> We refuse to believe that only liberal students demonstrate "outstanding potential" in public service.

As a publicly funded award charged with preparing the civic leaders of tomorrow, the Truman Scholarship should, at a bare minimum, be reflective of the country's breadth of values,

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/do-the-rhodes-and-truman-scholarships-have-any-room-for-the-right/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.truman.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/Truman\\_CBJ%202025\\_Final.pdf](https://www.truman.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/Truman_CBJ%202025_Final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Truman Scholars, 20 U.S.C. § 2005 (1975); and Harry S. Truman Memorial Scholarship Act, S. 3548, 93rd Cong., 2nd sess. (1974)

viewpoints, and interests. The Truman Foundation requested approximately \$3 million in appropriations for the upcoming fiscal year.<sup>4</sup> However, if the Truman Scholarship functions as a career booster solely for students of a particular political persuasion, it should no longer be worthy of Congressional support, taxpayer funding, or its exalted public image.

To help us assess the efficacy of the Truman program, please respond to the following questions by June 3, 2024:

1. What measures are you taking to ensure the Truman Scholarship truly “supports scholars from a wide range of perspectives”?
2. How do you ensure that Truman Finalist Selection Committee members and Regional Review Committee members do not discriminate against conservative students?
3. In a recent news article, you were quoted as saying that “the Truman Scholars selected are reflective of the pool of candidates before us. If students are not nominated or do not apply, we cannot select them.”<sup>5</sup> Between 2021 and 2023, what percentage of your applicant pool advocated primarily for conservative causes?
4. What steps are you taking to recruit a more ideologically diverse pool of nominees?

If you have any questions, please contact RJ Martin at [rj.martin@mail.house.gov](mailto:rj.martin@mail.house.gov) or 202-225-4527. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Virginia Foxx  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Education and the Workforce



Robert B. Aderholt  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human  
Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations



Burgess Owens  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Higher Education  
and Workforce Development  
Committee on Education and the Workforce

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<sup>4</sup> [https://www.truman.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/Truman\\_CBJ%202025\\_Final.pdf](https://www.truman.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/Truman_CBJ%202025_Final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/frederickhess/2024/05/08/rhodes-and-truman-scholarships-shouldnt-only-serve-blue-america/?sh=37e2d5541fb4>

CC: Janet Napolitano  
President, Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation