

BUSINESS INSIDER AFRICA

Congressional stock ban hearing delayed after Rep. Zoe Lofgren gets COVID-19

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The Committee on House Administration is postponing its hearing on congressional stock trading.

The hearing is being postponed because the chair, Democratic Rep. Zoe Lofgren, has COVID-19. A new date hasn't been set yet.

The Committee on House Administration is postponing its hearing to debate over the merits of banning federal lawmakers from trading individual stocks after its chairwoman, Rep. Zoe Lofgren, tested positive for COVID-19.

A new date hasn't yet been set, said Peter Whippy, spokesman for the committee.

Lofgren, a Democrat from California, announced her positive test result Sunday on Twitter, shortly after House Democrats returned from their issue retreat in Philadelphia. The committee announced Monday that the hearing would be postponed.

Rep. Zoe Lofgren (@RepZoeLofgren) March 13, 2022

When the hearing does happen, it will be the first on the issue in more than a decade.

It will also mark an acceleration on considering a stock trade restriction after Insider's "Conflicted Congress" investigation found more than 1 in 10 members of Congress had failed to report their stock trades in a timely fashion. Many hadn't faced late penalties as required by the 2012 Stop Trading on Congressional Knowledge Act, or STOCK Act.

Insider's investigation also uncovered numerous conflict-of-interest concerns where members of Congress personally invested in industries from energy to pharmaceuticals to media that they oversee through their congressional committee postings.

Members of Congress or their spouses have invested in missile manufacturers amid Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A few hold or have recently held stock in Russian companies, including Russian oil giant Lukoil.

Lofgren announced the stock hearing earlier this month. In her announcement, Lofgren stressed that the committee would be looking at how frequently lawmakers failed to comply with the STOCK Act and whether penalties should be stiffer.

Republicans and Democrats both in the House and the Senate have sponsored several similar bills that, to varying degrees, restrict how members of Congress trade stocks and otherwise handle their personal finances while serving in public office.

Among points of debate: whether a congressional stock ban should extend to spouses and dependent children, and whether unelected officials, from top congressional staffers to federal judges, should also be included.

The committee did not release a list of witnesses. But two sources confirmed to Insider that Democratic members asked for testimony from nonprofit anti-corruption organizations, including the Project on Government Oversight and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington.

They also invited testimony from the Congressional Research Service, a nonpartisan research institute that operates from the Library of Congress.

Insider also learned on Monday that Republicans planned to call Jennifer Schulp, director of financial regulation studies at the Center for Monetary and Financial Alternatives at the libertarian CATO institute.