



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

September 19, 2025

Dear Co-Chairman McGovern, Co-Chairman Smith, and Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission,

I am writing to correct the record for spoken [testimony](#) for the September 9, 2025, Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing “[Laws Regulating Foreign NGOs: Human Rights Implications](#).”

Michael Shellenberger of the unaccredited University of Austin said:

“You know, I would just also say, look, we saw what happened with USAID. We discovered, for example, that it had basically created this group called the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, that it was acting as an intermediary to the intelligence community to make public financial documents, financial information.”

This is factually incorrect and there is no proof of this wildly inaccurate accusation.

Specifically:

a.) USAID did not create OCCRP. [Here](#) is the history of [OCCRP](#)’s founding. We received some USAID funding, primarily for training investigative journalists in areas where there was very little or no such reporting. OCCRP is a hybrid organization — we are an investigative newsroom with a media development arm that helps train journalists around the world in reporting techniques to uncover organized crime and corruption.

b.) OCCRP only takes funding on the condition that we exercise complete editorial independence. OCCRP has a clear division between staff who handle donations and those who produce the journalism. Donors never have access to editorial meetings or any aspect of our editorial process, nor do they have input into what stories we publish.

b.) OCCRP is an internationally respected investigative journalism network with staff and member centers across six continents. We fight crime and corruption, and this is the focus of our reporting. We have won over 100 global awards for our reporting and have uncovered large-scale organized crime, money laundering, and other illicit



activities that harm public welfare. Our reporting has helped return over \$11 billion to governments through asset seizures and fines, including about \$3 billion to the United States — a return of more than \$100 for every dollar received from the U.S. government.

c.) We have never worked for or “been an intermediary” of any intelligence community. We publish investigations with actionable evidence and have no control who uses our work. Our work is strictly non-partisan and we employ the highest standards of independent, fact-based reporting in the public interest.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with each of you and your staff to discuss OCCRP’s work and correct this wrong information.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Drew Sullivan
Co-Founder and Publisher