

Sen. Roger F. Wicker, *Mississippi*
Chairman

Rep. Joe Wilson, *South Carolina*
Co-Chairman



July 16, 2026

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Senator for Mississippi
U.S. Senate
425 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Hudson
Member for North Carolina's 9th District
U.S. House of Representatives
2112 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Wicker and Congressman Hudson,

As the chief opponents of hosting the OSCE PA annual session in America, I am writing directly to alleviate concerns and address vicious rumors that are falsely clouding the circumstances surrounding hosting the session in the United States.

One of the first claims that was thrown against Charleston was that it lacked sufficient catering, and dining options. Charleston is home to hundreds of restaurants including 15 in the Michelin guide and is world renowned for its dining scene. Since hearing these claims the Charleston Tourism office has already heard from numerous restaurants and catering companies offering their services to the event in 2027. The event will bring roughly 500 additional visitors to Charleston, a group no larger than the standard Southern wedding- planning to feed 500+ people is a near daily occurrence in South Carolina. It is also worth emphasizing that the 57 participating states are responsible for their own dining reservations, and paying for their meals- this is not the responsibility of the U.S. taxpayer, nor the responsibility of the Commission staff to plan. It is insulting to South Carolina to claim it lacks hospitality accommodations.

When this was addressed, the concerns shifted to a claim that the appropriations, which all of us signed in March, would not be passed into law until the end of the year. This was not remarkable news now, nor was it in March when we all requested the appropriation. Congress has been on a historical late streak with passing appropriations, and this has been planned for in the contingency. The cost of the convention center (the single largest piece) was invoiced for less than \$172,000- an amount the Commission could pay out of the FY26 budget comfortably, if absolutely necessary, without risk of underfunding any other Commission needs. It is worth nothing that the House this week passed the NSRP appropriations bill which included the funding for this event. Whenever the Congress is able to agree and pass a complete appropriation package for FY27 there will be additional funds available as needed, but the lack of final passage prior to early 2027 is not only likely, but it has been planned for since coordination began in 2024, is expected, and is not in any way an obstacle to hosting in July 2027 in the United States.

When we spoke about the low cost of the convention center, I was informed Charleston lacked the hotels and that would not be able to get reservations in time. I have already had conversations with the Charleston Place Hotel and the Bennett Hotel which are both looking forward to hosting the U.S. delegation in July of 2027. As the closest hotels to the convention center that is where conversations began, but there are thousands of hotel rooms in Charleston, as they welcome millions of tourists annually. As with any standard hotel, the rooms do not need to be substantially prepaid, and the rate and incidentals can be provided upon check-in in 2027. Additionally, as with dining, all 57 delegations are responsible for their own accommodations; this includes calling to make reservations and paying for the rooms- these tasks again do not fall on the U.S. taxpayer or the Commission staff to pay for and plan respectively.

Another falsehood that has been claimed was that the U.S. lacks the staff necessary to plan this event. The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe has 15 full time employees who are more than capable of planning this event. Sadly, the 119th Congress has lacked in CSCE hearings hosting a record low seven hearings to-date none of which have been Chaired by Chairman Wicker this year, during my House Chairmanship in the 118th Congress we led a record breaking 25 hearings. I am confident that under my returned leadership in January the 15 well-paid full-time CSCE staffers can make these accommodations. Additionally, my personal office staff both in Washington and in South Carolina are ready to assist with any logistics as necessary adding an additional 19 individuals to our planning capacity. Additional staff could be provided, if necessary, by the Charleston district offices of Congressman Clyburn, Senator Scott, and the winners of the Election for South Carolina's 1st Congressional District and the U.S. Senate Election. The Hague had a mere handful of staffers who planned the entire event start to finish, while we stand ready with 34 staff who are eager to work to represent America.

I recognize planning staff are not the only individuals necessary to host an event of this scale. The event will require staff on the ground like we saw in the Hague. I spoke with these individuals over the course of our time in the Netherlands and learned they were all unpaid volunteers working to make the event a success. I have already spoken with leadership at The Citadel and the College of Charleston which collectively enroll thousands of students and would be eager to offer this exciting volunteering opportunity to them next year. Beyond students, there are numerous service organizations in Charleston that could serve as potential volunteers. The Hague had around 100 volunteers that made the event a success, and Charleston can confidently plan to have a many more than 100 volunteers for next summer.

Just this week I was accosted with the newest falsehood about the event, that it would be "too difficult" to plan for July 2027 as the interpreters were not yet hired. As with all other concerns, this was taken seriously, I spoke with the Secretariat of the OSCE PA and learned that all interpreters at the Parliamentary Assembly are hired and provided by the Secretariat and are not the responsibility of the host country. Even if this were not the case, there are numerous companies across South Carolina and beyond that would eagerly provide their services for the convention in 2027.

One other concern was that we were not sufficiently progressing through the checklist provided by the OSCE PA. After numerous extensive conversations with the Secretariat, I can confirm that we have completed every task that is to be completed one year out from the

convention, and we are already working our way through numerous tasks that are not required for months, we are in fact ahead of schedule for the event. I was also told there was concern that the Secretariat had not yet visited South Carolina for a site visit, now that the Hague PA has concluded, I am happy to host and personally participate in the site visit to Charleston- whenever planned by the secretariat. Additionally, I would like to extend a warm invitation to you both to visit my birthplace of Charleston, and we can visit all sites together and alleviate any concerns directly.

While some have speculated that the event could be postponed to 2028 to manage the false concerns addressed above, the 2028 U.S. Presidential Election will overshadow any ability to plan this event. As you are all well aware the South Carolina Presidential Primary is a major national event and will draw resources and Candidates to visit the state in February. I was proud to lead President Bush through the state in 2004 as he launched his reelection campaign, and I am certain that the Presidential election will pull resources in a manner making 2028 hosting exceedingly difficult. Postponing to 2028 is simply not a realistic option for South Carolina. Numerous other OSCE delegations have publicly passed on hosting during their election years for a reason, and inviting this additional challenge seems irrational. Meanwhile Serbia has their next election in 2027, and it is irresponsible for the U.S. to shirk its commitment to host and place the burden on Serbia during their election year. Additionally worth noting, the U.S. has only once hosted the OSCE PA and that occurred in 2005 in Washington, D.C., while Belgrade, Serbia has already hosted in 2011.

Given all of these concerns and the obvious desire for the United States to host a top-notch conference, I have been conferring with the planners for previous conferences as well. As you know the appropriation request we all signed is for \$4 million USD. This came as conversations with the planners for the 2025 Porto OSCE PA budgeted as much and we want to ensure the U.S. is fully prepared for any acts of God or other obstacles that could potentially arise as we work to complete preparations over the next year. I have since had follow-up conversations and learned that the final costs were below \$1 million USD. As I mentioned earlier regarding the convention center, the CSCE operates with a significant budget surplus and could easily cover initial expenses, if necessary. If Senator Wicker agreed to sign the disbursement waivers, we could comfortably pay for almost all if not all expenses for the conference, with this year's operating budget- even given the large raises given to Commission staff, and new hires.

Serbia is at an inflection point in Europe. They remain a controversial figure among European Union member states who have adopted sanctions on Russia that they have not mirrored, all while they continue oil and natural gas purchases from the Russian Federation; while allowing Putin to purchase Serbia's largest oil company, Naftna Industrija Srbije (NIS). It would be a mistake to take an organization designed by President Ford to combat Russian border aggression to a country that has been cooperating with war criminal Putin and his war of aggression against the people of Ukraine.

I was deeply disappointed to learn on July 4, 2026 that Deputy Head of the U.S. Delegation Roger Wicker announced during the opening session while I was traveling to the Hague that Charleston was canceled and withdrawing its bid. This announcement was not authorized, as the Deputy Head of Delegation lacks the authority to speak on my behalf, as the

Head of the U.S. Delegation, in withdrawing the bid. Not only was the announcement unauthorized, but it was also unwarranted. Prior to that date we had one conversation less than 48 hours prior where you noted minor concerns, which I assured you I would address and return to you with answers in the Hague. The only rational reason the unauthorized announcement could have gone forward was if it was knowingly an attempt to sabotage the U.S. hosting for unknown alternative or personal reasons. I would appreciate an explanation of this bizarre decision to act without authority and undermine the United States of America publicly at an international forum.

On a final note, I had many conversations with my dear friend and our late colleague Senator Lindsey Graham about hosting the conference in Charleston. Senator Graham in his role as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs was supportive of the program. However, his support ran deeper, Senator Graham's career pushed for Peace Through Strength, and America First leadership on the international stage. Hosting this Conference in Charleston in 2027 is not only the right thing to do, but it is a strong way to honor Senator Graham's memory while continuing his legacy of fighting for freedom from his beloved home state of South Carolina. I urge you to support this conference, if not for our friendship, or the affiliation of America over Serbia- I urge your support in the memory of Senator Graham.

At the conclusion of The Hague OSCE PA last week the standing committee did not take a vote on the host city for 2027 so Charleston can easily be restored and the plan you supported can move forward. The issue is not settled. I urge you to reverse your decision and support Charleston for the 2027 OSCE PA. I hope this letter has addressed every concern you may have, if not, I remain available to discuss and address any and all future concerns.

Sincerely,



Joe Wilson
Co-Chairman
Head of the U.S. Delegation

CC: Members of the South Carolina U.S. Congressional Delegation
CC: U.S. Commissioners on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CC: The Honorable Pere Joan Pons Sampietro, President of the OSCE PA
CC: The Honorable Henry McMaster, Governor of South Carolina
CC: The Honorable Mike Johnson, Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
CC: The Honorable William S. Cogswell, Jr., Mayor of Charleston