

House Defeats GOP Bid to Censure Plaskett Over Epstein Texts, Keeps Her Intelligence Committee Seat

The House voted 214–209 to block a Republican effort to censure Plaskett and remove her from the Intelligence Committee after documents revealed her 2019 text exchanges with Jeffrey Epstein. Seven Republicans broke ranks as Democrats unified in opposition

Crime / **Published On November 18, 2025 10:40 PM /**

Ernice Gilbert **November 18, 2025**

Image not found or type unknown



Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett. By. USVI.

The U.S. House of Representatives on Tuesday voted down a Republican-backed effort to censure Delegate Stacey Plaskett of the U.S. Virgin Islands and strip her of her seat on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, ending the push with a narrow 214–209 defeat. The outcome keeps her assignment intact after several Republicans broke with their party to oppose

the measure. Three voted with Democrats in Plaskett's favor, while four others declined to vote, producing a total of seven GOP defections.

The failed resolution, introduced by Rep. Ralph Norman of South Carolina, stemmed from documents released last week as part of more than 20,000 pages from Jeffrey Epstein's estate. Among the materials were text messages sent between Epstein and Plaskett during a February 2019 House Oversight Committee hearing featuring testimony from Michael Cohen, former attorney to Donald Trump. The messages included Epstein's real-time commentary, personal compliments, and suggestions related to Trump-focused questioning as Plaskett prepared to question Cohen. The timestamps matched events occurring on the House floor that day.

Plaskett, who serves as the non-voting delegate representing the U.S. Virgin Islands, has said the messages were unsolicited and similar to the routine input she often receives from staff, constituents, and members of the public. She has denied any improper influence or awareness of Epstein's motives.

Republicans pushing for the censure argued that the messages raised serious ethical concerns, citing Epstein's 2008 conviction and Plaskett's work on the Intelligence Committee, which handles classified material. Members of the House Freedom Caucus were among those pressing for her removal and calling the exchanges unacceptable.

The vote unfolded hours after Democrats [unsuccessfully attempted to redirect](#) the issue to the House Ethics Committee. That motion failed 214–213 on Monday, clearing the path for the censure resolution to reach the House floor. Democratic leaders, including Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, described the measure as a partisan distraction from broader legislative work.

Following the vote, Plaskett issued a detailed statement responding to both the resolution and the public release of the materials. "Jeffrey Epstein's actions represent one of the most grotesque abuses of wealth, power, and privilege in modern memory. His conduct—proven through criminal charges, survivor testimony, and extensive investigations—was not merely immoral; it was predatory, exploitative, and this is the type of behavior that as an attorney, I have worked to fight against and I will continue to fight for the people of the Virgin Islands in my capacity as their representative."

She said the House vote reflected the weakness of the accusations. "The House vote today affirmed what I have maintained from the beginning: the accusations behind this censure effort were rooted in partisanship, not facts. I am grateful that a majority of my colleagues recognized this for what it was and refused to allow Congress to be used as a stage for political retaliation."

Plaskett also tied the proceedings to ongoing disputes over Epstein-related documents. "It is clear that President Trump and Republicans in Congress attempted to abuse their power to distract the country from their failure to release the Epstein files. For months we have seen the President abuse his authority by turning the Justice Department into his own personal vendetta. That is true now with Epstein, as the President demands certain Democrats—and only Democrats—be investigated. This censure effort was part of that absurd and abusive campaign."

She described the environment of the 2019 hearing directly referenced in the resolution. "In February 2019, during a House Oversight Committee hearing, I raised serious questions about the GOP effort to discredit and intimidate Trump's former lawyer Michael Cohen and efforts to dismiss allegations against Trump concerning financial fraud and hush money payments. During that hearing, which began in a contentious manner between me and Ranking Member Jim Jordan,

I received texts from staff, constituents, and the public at large offering advice, support, and in some cases partisan vitriol—including from Jeffrey Epstein, who was a constituent at the time. This hearing occurred months before Epstein's arrest by federal authorities.”

Plaskett noted her broader record. “As a former prosecutor handling the worst felonies and innumerable narcotics cases, I learned to receive information from sources I do not like to obtain information that helps get at the truth. My five minutes of questioning came from research and my 20 years of legal experience. I was getting at the truth as the American people who sent us to Washington ask us to do.”

She added: “As I have long made clear, I have a strong record combating sexual assault and human trafficking. I am disgusted by Epstein's deviant behavior. I strongly support his victims and admire their courage. I have long believed and supported that the entire Epstein files be released.”

Plaskett said she will continue her work in Congress. “My commitment to transparency, accountability, and integrity in public service has never wavered. I have always been willing to answer tough questions and engage openly with the people of the Virgin Islands. Today's outcome underscores that the work I do for our community stands on solid ground.”

She emphasized the issues facing residents back home. “More importantly, this moment reinforces the need to stay focused on what matters. Families in the Virgin Islands are facing real challenges—from the cost of living to economic pressures to infrastructure needs. I remain fully committed to delivering federal resources, advancing legislation, and fighting every day to ensure that our voice is strong and respected in Washington.”

Her statement concluded with a message about democratic norms. “As Democrats and Americans, we must defend the rule of law and oppose efforts by this Administration and the Republican-led Congress to undermine our democracy. Political theater will come and go. My dedication to the people of the Virgin Islands does not. The work continues with the same focus, energy, and determination as always.”

The vote took place on the same day the House overwhelmingly approved the Epstein Files Transparency Act by a vote of 427–1, requiring the Department of Justice to release additional records connected to Epstein. The simultaneous consideration of both measures intensified debates over the motives behind the censure attempt and the broader political fallout from the document release.

Epstein’s legal history, which continues to reverberate through the political arena, included a June 30, 2008 guilty plea to two state felony charges in Florida: solicitation of prostitution and solicitation of prostitution with a minor. He reentered the national spotlight in 2019 when New York federal prosecutors charged him with sex trafficking before his death in custody later that year.

With Tuesday’s vote, the censure attempt has come to a close for now. Plaskett remains the ranking Democrat on the Intelligence Committee, and no additional disciplinary actions were announced. Her office has said a statement will be forthcoming.