



Landmark Lobbying Reform: A New Direction toward Honest Leadership and Open Government

Key Points:

- **The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act will bring unprecedented transparency to lobbyists' activities and is another major step to change the way business is done in Washington.**
- **This bill is the most sweeping lobby reform in a generation and has been hailed by reform groups as a "sea change for citizens" and "landmark reform."**
- **The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act of 2007, together with the Congressional ethics reforms enacted in the first 100 hours of this Congress, are significant steps forward in cleaning up the culture of corruption that plagued Washington in past years.**
- **On the first day of the 110th Congress, we passed a landmark rules package – the toughest ethics reform in a generation – that broke the link between lobbyists and legislators: no gifts, no private jets, and no meals from lobbyists.**
- **These urgent reforms have been held up for weeks by Senate Republicans refusing to go to conference and negotiate; the American people cannot wait any longer for change to come to Washington.**
- **From the first day of the 110th Congress, we began a new era of honest, open government, returning this House to the American people. And with this comprehensive lobbying reform bill, we are keeping our promise to the American people to make this Congress the most honest and open in history.**
- **The New Direction Congress is dedicated to putting the interests of everyday Americans ahead of the special interests.**

Today, the House will consider S. 1, the final House-Senate agreement on the Honest Leadership, Open Government Act of 2007. This is tough legislation designed to end the culture of corruption and restore accountability in Washington. The bill ends the tight-knit relationship between lobbyists and lawmakers and takes another major step toward making the 110th Congress the most open, honest Congress in history. The House passed its version of the bill by a vote of 396-22 in May. In January, the Senate passed its versions by a vote of 96-2.

The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act of 2007:

- **New transparency for lobbyist bundling campaign contributions:** For the first time, requires reporting on lobbyists who "bundle," or collect campaign checks for Members of Congress. Requires

the Member's campaign to report if lobbyist bundled more than \$15,000 in campaign contributions semiannually for that Member.

- **Historic disclosure of other financial contributions to Members:** Increases disclosure of lobbyists' contributions to lawmakers and entities controlled by lawmakers, including contributions to Members' charities, to events or entities honoring members, contributions intended to pay the cost of a meeting or a retreat, and contributions to Presidential library funds.
- **Lavish convention parties:** Prohibits Members of Congress from attending national political convention parties held in their honor and paid for by lobbyists or their clients.
- **Ends K-Street Project:** Bans the K-Street Project, which prohibits private entities from hiring and firing based on politics.
- **Expands public disclosure of lobbyist activities:** Doubles the frequency of the disclosure of Lobbyists' Reports to four times a year. Establishes an online, searchable public database of lobbyist disclosure information. Requires lobbyists to disclose past executive branch and Congressional employment. Prohibits lobbyists from giving gifts and travel in violation of House and Senate rules. Increases criminal and civil penalties for violating the Lobby Disclosure Act to \$200,000 and five years in prison.
- **Ending conflicts of interest and strengthening restrictions on post congressional employment:** Requires sitting Members to disclose job negotiations for post-Congressional employment and to recuse themselves for purposes of a conflict of interest. It also strengthens the revolving door banning Senators from lobbying their colleagues for two years. Requires Members to prohibit their staff from having any official contact with the Members' lobbyist spouse on behalf of the spouse's client.
- **Strengthen Senate Ethics Rules, similar to already enacted House Reforms:** Includes a variety of changes to Senate rules, including a ban on gift and travel by lobbyists, full disclosure of earmarks, points of order against out of scope earmarks and limits on secret holds.
- **Congressional Pension Accountability:** Denies taxpayer-funded pension benefits to Members of Congress convicted of corruption while serving the American people.
- **Expands public disclosure of Members' travel and finances:** Establishes an online, searchable public database of Member travel and personal financial disclosure forms.
- **Disclosure of stealth lobbying:** Closes a loophole in current law that permits coalitions -- such as the one that funded the extensive "Harry and Louise" ad campaign that targeted health care legislation in 1993-94 -- to avoid disclosing their clients.

What People Are Saying About the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act

“The lobbying and ethics reform legislation scheduled to be considered by the House tomorrow represents sweeping, fundamental reform in response to the corruption scandals that plagued the last Congress. The lobbying disclosure reforms will provide a sea change for citizens in the information made available to the public about how lobbyists and lobbying organizations provide campaign contributions and various other forms of financial support to assist members of Congress.”

Fred Wertheimer – President Democracy 21, 7/30/07

“This important lobbying and ethics reform bill will be a landmark of more honest government for years to come.”

Craig Holman -- lobbyist for Public Citizen, 7/30/07

“The proposal officially unveiled today makes good on the promises of greater transparency from the new leadership.... this one [bill] will bring to light information that has never been available before about the way lobbyists use money and special benefits to influence the outcome of legislation. This is information Americans deserve and information American voters demanded at the polls last November.”

Meredith McGehee – Campaign Legal Center 7/30/07

“This legislation is remarkably good considering the challenges it has faced,” said Wilson. “For the first time, Congress is requiring disclosure of big-dollar bundling by lobbyists—a key element for truly reforming the way business is done in Washington.”

Mary G. Wilson – League of Women Voters, 7/30/07

“The legislation being presented to the House constitutes landmark reform of the nation’s lobbying disclosure laws and landmark reform of the Senate ethics rules. It is designed to help address the worst congressional corruption scandals in 30 years that were revealed during the last Congress....Our organizations strongly urge you to vote for the lobbying and ethics legislation when it comes to the House floor for a vote.”

Campaign Legal Center
League of Women Voters
Common Cause
Public Citizen
Democracy 21
U.S. PIRG

“It wasn’t easy, it took too long, and it’s not done yet -- but before Congress leaves for its August recess, it should have completed a lobbying reform bill that would, for the first time, require disclosure of the bundles of campaign checks that lobbyists bring in for politicians...The lobbying package makes important changes, some of which were written into House rules in January. It would prohibit lawmakers and staff members from accepting gifts or travel from lobbyists and their clients. It would end lawmakers’ ability to fly on corporate aircraft at cut-rate prices; senators and White House candidates would have to pay regular charter rates for such flights, while House members would simply be barred from accepting travel on private jets. It would lengthen, from one year to two, the revolving-door prohibition on senators and Senate staff members; the House limit would remain at one year...Most important, the measure would require lawmakers to include on their campaign finance reports the identities of lobbyists who raise \$15,000 or more for them during a six-month period -- shining a needed light on an important source of influence. Keeping this requirement part of the bill was a difficult, and important, achievement.” [*Washington Post*, Editorial, 7/31/07]