

The Real Republican Agenda:

Back to the “Exact Same” Culture of Corruption

Today Minority Leader Boehner is giving a speech on Congressional reform, but it’s not clear how he will answer a major question – why should voters trust that Republicans would do things differently this time? Today’s Republican Leaders are not fresh faces and they plan a return to the exact same agenda as before. During their time in power, Republicans did not make government more open and transparent, and in fact allowed a culture of corruption to flourish.

THEN: Under Congressional Republicans, the special interests were put before the public interest.

- Ran the “K Street Project” that attempted to influence employment decisions of lobbying firms in exchange for political access.
- Allowed the practice of accepting gifts, travel on private jets, and meals from lobbyists to flourish.
- Failed to require frequent and thorough disclosure of travel, including House pre-approval of all officially connected travel, and more rigorous disclosure of lobbyist activity and finances.
- Exploded the use of earmarks, with no transparency to let people know for whom Members were making requests. (Quadrupled the number of earmarks from 4,000 in 1994 to over 15,000 at the end of the 109th Congress in 2005.)
- Weakened the bipartisan Ethics Committee – even firing the Republican Chair after it admonished Republican Majority Leader Tom DeLay.

When they were in charge of the House, Republicans did not follow an open and transparent legislative process:

- Waived public review.
- Forced votes less than a day after legislation was completed, often in the middle of the night.
- Added in last minute provisions to protect special interests in completed conference reports.

NOW: Republicans are already showing that they will return to the exact same agenda. Six months after their year-long earmark moratorium began, Congressional Republicans are already breaking their first pledge, with a return to the exact same policies that exploded earmarks.

“With their eyes on a House majority, Republicans are leaving the door open to allowing earmarks after a one-year party-imposed moratorium.” [Politico, 9/16/10]

The Republican record offers a clear contrast to the Democrats’ landmark government reform legislation, which was the toughest ethics reform in a generation, and Democrats’ support for a strong, bipartisan Congressional ethics process that has been praised by outside experts. While Republicans pay lip service today to transparency and accountability to cover up their poor track record, Democrats have a proven record of it.