



Buyers Up • Congress Watch • Critical Mass • Global Trade Watch • Health Research Group • Litigation Group
Joan Claybrook, President

April 26, 2006

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Lobbying reform legislation (H.R. 4975)

Dear Representative:

Public Citizen expresses its deep frustration with the direction and content of the lobbying reform legislation (H.R. 4975) that is about to be considered on the floor of the House. The legislation began as a woefully inadequate effort to address the public's legitimate fears of corruption on Capitol Hill, and it has been whittled down even further by committee actions. H.R. 4975 is a weak bill that offers almost nothing to regain the confidence of the American public in the integrity of Congress.

The legislation fails to address the most egregious ethics and lobbying abuses that have tarnished the image and reputations of several members and of Congress itself. The legislation as currently written:

- Fails to establish a functional and effective ethics enforcement committee.
- Conceals the powerfully-influential fundraising relationship between lobbyists and lawmakers.
- Allows the revolving door between Congress and K Street to spin out of control.
- Makes no effort to reign in the use of corporate jets to shuttle lawmakers across the globe at the expense of companies with business pending before the same lawmakers.
- Provides at best a very cynical and temporary moratorium on privately-sponsored travel for members – which expires after the 2006 elections.

There is nothing in this legislation that could convince the American public that Congress is aware that a problem of undue lobbying influence exists or that Congress is trying to do something about it.

Public Citizen opposes H.R. 4975 as it is currently written. We will not be a party to attempting to deceive the public that the bill offers anything close to reforming ethics and lobbying, despite its title. It is imperative that H.R. 4975 be strengthened to address these concerns.

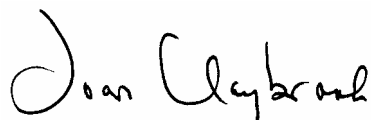
We strongly recommend that the House Rules Committee open up the bill for full discussion and debate over how to make this legislation into a serious reform package, and we strongly urge

Congress to step up to the plate and address the scandals and perceptions of corruption sweeping over the Hill. At the very least, Congress must adopt strengthening amendments that would:

- Create an effective Office of Public Integrity to monitor compliance to the ethics and lobbying laws.
- Disclose campaign fundraising activities by lobbyists, especially the hosting of fundraising events and bundling contributions from others.
- Disclose who is paying for expensive broadcast ads and direct mail intended to influence actions of Congress.
- Ban the use of discounted corporate jets.
- Restrict privately-sponsored travel for lawmakers and their staff.
- Ban gifts from lobbyists to members.
- Slow the revolving door by prohibiting former public officials from conducting paid lobbying activity for two years after public service.

These are the reforms that are needed to assuage the public's legitimate fears that public policy is for sale on Capitol Hill and to convince the public that Congress is acting to restore its integrity.

Sincerely,



Joan Claybrook
President
Public Citizen



Craig Holman
Legislative Representative
Public Citizen