

LARSON ENDORSES CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS REFORMS

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WASHINGTON, D.C. - Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) called today for Congress to pass ethics reforms proposed by Representatives David Obey (D-WI), Barney Frank (D-MA), David Price (D-NC) and Tom Allen (D-ME).

Their good-government proposals, which the representatives announced during a panel discussion at the Center for American Progress earlier this month, would restore accountability, re-establish checks and balances and curtail special-interest influence in Congress.

The package of 14 reforms calls for:

- Ending lobbyist payment for Congressional travel
- Strengthening fiscal responsibility
- Preventing the use of pork-barrel earmarks to buy votes
- Eliminating the two-day Congressional work week
- Curbing legislative abuses such as extended roll calls and misuse of the rules process
- Prohibiting legislation from being voted on without time for member review
- Prevent legislation from being slipped into conference reports without a full public vote by the conference committee

The appalling end-of-term abuses by the Republicans reinforce the desperate need for reform. Under five years of absolute Republican control, corruption has become standard operating procedure. Neither indictments, investigations nor public outrage have shamed them. And as we saw with the disgraceful exploitation of the defense spending bill to ram through an extra special-interest gift to the oil companies, the Republicans continue to brazenly flout the system.

They show no respect for law, rules or our Constitution's values on open government. We have watched vital jobs protecting the nation's interests go to incompetent insiders. We see select groups, unelected by the people, set national policy. As a result our laws on prescription drug benefits for seniors, energy costs, tax breaks have been enacted purely for the benefit of special interests. Regulations have been sidestepped allowing taxpayer money to be thrown at well-connected contractors while our troops suffer shortages of body armor and thousands of Gulf Coast residents remain in shelters.

These reforms will re-establish integrity in a system that now favors the highest bidder. They will resurrect the guard of checks and balances so that national - not special - interests are served. They will help put the brakes on runaway deficits that shortchange our citizens' priorities of security, opportunity and trust.

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