

# Increase Oversight and Accountability of Lobbyists

## *Cosponsor the Lobbyist Disclosure Enhancement Act*

May, 2011

Dear Colleague:

We are all familiar with Jack Abramoff and other pay-to-play scandals that have plagued Congress. While such corruption is not as common as it may appear – most lobbyists are hard-working individuals simply advocating on behalf of their issues – such scandals have a real and damaging effect on the work of Congress in that they sap the public’s confidence in their elected officials. And without that confidence, Congress cannot lead. According to a recent Gallup Poll measuring the public’s confidence in institutions, Congress ranked dead last with only 11 percent of Americans saying they a great deal of confidence in Congress.

The best remedy to counter this deficit of trust in government is transparency. The “Lobbyist Disclosure Enhancement Act” is designed to make the work of lobbyists and their interactions with Members of Congress more open and transparent to the public.

A recent GAO study found the need for more transparency and accountability of special interests and their influence in government. While a majority of lobbyists are filing the proper disclosure reports with the Clerk and the Secretary, the GAO study highlighted loopholes, slack reporting, and ignorance of the law which should not be tolerated.

The “Lobbyists Disclosure Enhancement Act” would fix several of these loopholes and significantly increase enforcement of disclosure rules by:

**Improving Disclosure on Lobbying Reports** – Currently all lobbyists have to disclose is whether they met with the “House” or “Senate,” essentially useless information. This bill would require lobbyists to disclose which Members they lobbied, and if they meet with staff to report the office or committee.

**Closing the 20 Percent Loophole** – Currently individuals who spend less than 20 percent of their time lobbying do not have to register. This bill would close that loophole and require all paid lobbyists, who make two or more lobbying contacts to register.

**Speeding Up Registration of Lobbyists** – Under current law, lobbyists can lobby for 45 days, or a month and a half, without ever registering. This bill would require registration within 5 days of making a lobbying contact or being hired to do so.

**Improving Disclosure of Lobbyist Contributions** – At this time, lobbyists only have to report their campaign contributions twice per year. This bill would require lobbyists to report their campaign contributions quarterly in order to conduct more up-to-date oversight.

**Improving Enforcement by Creating a Lobbyist Disclosure Enforcement Task Force –** Despite the findings of the GAO report that lobbyist reporting errors are occurring, not a single settlement or civil action has been taken since 2005, in large part because no staff are dedicated to pursuing such cases. This bill creates a special task force to investigate potential violations of the “Lobbying Disclosure Act.”

Please join me in cosponsoring this important bill intended to shine a light on the actions of special interests, improve accountability of lobbyists, and help increase the public’s trust in the federal government.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Robyn Russell ([robyn.russell@mail.house.gov](mailto:robyn.russell@mail.house.gov), 6-7646).

Sincerely,

Mike Quigley