

CASTLE SUPPORTS NEW HOUSE ETHICS OFFICE -- MARCH 12, 2008

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Says Commission Should be Stronger

Washington, DC -- Congressman Michael N. Castle (R-DE) voted in favor of H. Res. 1031, a resolution which established an independent Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) composed of six board members, who are jointly appointed by Speaker of the House and the Minority Leader. Board members must not be current Members of Congress or lobbyists. This vote passed the House 229-182 and immediately establishes an office to review possible ethics violations by House Members or employees and make recommendations to the standing House Ethics Committee.

Congressman Castle has long called for implementing an independent ethics panel, and last year, he introduced legislation (H.R. 97) to establish an outside ethics commission that would have the ability to subpoena witnesses for testimony.

"A few years ago, it became clear to me that our current House Ethics Committee was not a strong enough deterrent to the handful of elected officials who act dishonorably in Congress," said Congressman Castle. "Therefore, I introduced a bill to establish an outside and independent body to investigate ethics violations committed by Members of Congress."

"Last night the House finally voted to establish a new entity to review violations of ethics in the House of Representatives. Unfortunately, the House proposal lacks subpoena power, an element I find necessary for an investigatory body. I along with Rep. Shays (R-CT) attempted to grant subpoena power by amendment, but it was rejected by the majority. While I think the Commission should be stronger, I voted for the final product in hope that shifting the review process outside the existing structure will help prevent questionable behavior by adding another layer of oversight. After a period of time, Members should review the success of this new entity to ensure its investigatory role can effectively be carried out as structured."

For more information on Congressman Castle's Involvement in Ethics Initiatives please visit: www.castle.house.gov.

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