

Ethics Reform

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The poor decisions of some in Washington, D.C. have raised awareness to loopholes in the regulations for both lobbyists and lawmakers, highlighting the need for comprehensive ethics reform. In Congress, Rep. Castle introduced his own ethics strengthening proposal and advocated for policies aimed at greater government transparency and accountability. Such initiatives include;

- Ethics Reform for Members and Lobbyists - Rep. Castle supported the House rules package, which prohibits Members of Congress from accepting gifts from lobbyists or organizations employing lobbyists, from traveling on trips financed by lobbyists, and also requires annual ethics training for Members and staff. Taking reform farther, he introduced the Accountability and Transparency in Ethics Act that includes mandatory ethics training for lobbyists, too. The legislation also extends the period of time former members and staff must wait to lobby after leaving Congress and includes several measures aimed at maintaining separation between personal, campaign, and official funds and activities.

- Outside Ethics Commission - The current process for addressing ethics violations through the House Committee on Standards is not working. As a result, Rep. Castle introduced legislation to establish an outside Commission to initiate reviews of unethical conduct among Members. The House recently enacted a similar proposal, but it lacked one strong component included in Castle's bill; giving the ethics commission the power to subpoena witnesses for testimony.

- Earmark Expenditures - With over \$10 billion in earmarks in the recent omnibus, it is clear that something must be done to reform this process. Rep. Castle believes that the earmark process must be transparent to eliminate wasteful spending requests, and has released his earmark requests for the fiscal year 2009. He supports a full moratorium on Congressional earmarking so all Members are held to the same high standards.

- Public Financing - This presidential race is predicted to cost more than \$1 billion, an unprecedented cost. The growing magnitude of money needed to run a viable campaign is a barrier to run for office, which is why public financing would provide increased opportunities. Castle supports the Presidential Funding Act which would significantly increase the amount of public money

available to participating candidates, making the public financing system viable. This would allow candidates to run competitive campaigns without becoming overly dependent on private and special interest donors.

- Defense

and Homeland Security Contracting -

In light of recent allegations of abuse on the part of government contractors, Rep. Castle has successfully passed legislation to prevent defense contractors for collecting unearned bonuses and to require companies to comply with the same conflict-of-interest laws that apply to government employees. Most recently, Castle has also fought to increase funding for the Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security Inspectors General, whose job it is to conduct audits and ensure transparency with respect to the relationship between the government and its contractors.