

25+ Groups Urge the OCE to be Strengthened and Codified into Law

January 17, 2023

Dear Representative:

We write in strong opposition to the recently passed provisions in the House rules package that attempt to weaken the Office of Congressional Ethics. We instead urge you to codify the OCE into law, as well as give it subpoena authority.

Gutting the independent ethics watchdog as the first official legislative action in the 118th Congress is not what Americans voted for in last year's midterms. Voters demanded accountability, ethics, and the rule of law, all of which the OCE works to achieve.

The OCE was created after several bribery and corruption scandals that resulted in numerous House members resigning or going to prison. In its nearly 15 years of existence, the Office of Congressional Ethics has served as an independent watchdog to provide nonpartisan oversight and accountability in the House of Representatives. It has referred for further investigation an almost equal number of Democratic and Republican Members, and the OCE helped fix a broken ethics process.

For far too long, the House Ethics Committee was a place where scandals were swept under the rug and ignored in a largely bipartisan way. Both Republicans and Democrats would frequently look the other way and ignore transgressions from the other party with a mutual understanding that both sides would operate that way. This process created distrust for Congress among much of the public.

Alternatively, the OCE increases public confidence in the House of Representatives and its members. To ensure it can fully continue to root out misconduct, the OCE should be codified into law and given full subpoena authority. The existence of the OCE is one of the key safeguards against corruption in the House of Representatives. Instead of weakening the OCE, we urge you to strengthen this important independent watchdog to ensure that the public has faith and confidence that Congress is working in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Common Cause
Accountable.US
Business for America
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Clean Elections Texas
Demand Progress
Democracy 21
End Citizens United/Let America Vote Action Fund
Fix Democracy First

Get Money Out–Maryland
Greenpeace USA
Indivisible
International Corporate Accountability Roundtable
Issue One
League of Conservation Voters
League of Women Voters of the United States
March On
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Project on Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
RepresentUs
SMART Elections
The Workers Circle
20/20 Vision DC