

LOBBYING & ETHICS “REFORM” IN THE 109TH CONGRESS

November 1994: Republicans retake the House for the first time in 40 years in the wake of numerous Democratic Congressional scandals.

- *“The time has come that the American people know exactly what their representatives are doing here in Washington...Are they feeding at the public trough, taking lobbyist paid vacations, getting wined and dined by special interest groups? Or are they working hard to represent their constituents? The people, the American people, have a right to know.”*
-Rep. Tom DeLay (R-TX) 11/16/94

September 28, 2005: Eleven years later, then-House Majority Leader DeLay is indicted in Texas for conspiring to violate Texas state election law. Vowing to return, DeLay steps down from his leadership post.

- *“Our team has the very big shoes of Tom DeLay to fill temporarily. Under the strong leadership of the Speaker, we will work hard to do what Tom would do—complete our work, and move forward with a positive agenda for the American people—until he returns.”* - House Majority Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO) 9/29/05
- *“I’m pleased that House Republicans came together in a unanimous vote to assemble a team that will continue to lead our agenda through the House. This temporary arrangement will allow us to continue our work until Tom DeLay can resume his duties as Majority Leader.”* - House Chief Deputy Whip Eric Cantor (R-VA) 9/29/05

November 28, 2005: Congressional scandals in the 109th Congress continued to grow as Rep. Randy “Duke” Cunningham (R-CA), a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, pleads guilty to accepting more than \$2 million in bribes from defense lobbyists.

January 3, 2006: Lobbyist Jack Abramoff pleads guilty to fraud, tax evasion and conspiracy to bribe public officials and agrees to cooperate with the ongoing Justice Department investigation. Four days later, Rep. DeLay announces he will not seek to regain Majority Leader post and the race for a successor begins amidst calls for lobbying reform. Republican legislators vow to address the congressional scandals and restore Americans faith in their elected officials.

- *“If I am elected majority leader, there will no longer be a ‘K Street project’ or anything else like it.”* - Rep. John Boehner (R-OH) 1/12 /06



- *“Look, one of the things that we have to do is be able to make sure that our members are above question. And I think members can probably function very well in this town without having to go out lunch with a lobbyist or to dinner with a lobbyist. They can pay for it for themselves, they have means to be able to do that, if that's what we have to do.” - House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) 1/17/06*
- *“I've been listening to, as the Speaker said, a wide range of members of the House and Senate, people outside of the Congress, here in Washington and from people all across the country over the past few weeks. And I believe that we are in a position today where we can come forward with some bold things. The speaker has just talked about the issue of a ban on privately funded travel. I believe that it's also very important for us to proceed with a significantly stronger gift ban, which would prevent members and staff from personally benefiting from gifts from lobbyists.” - House Rules Committee Chairman David Dreier (R-CA) 1/17/06*
- *“Unfortunately, recent scandals have caused some to question whether we have lost our vision, and if the faith they have placed in us is justified. While I have no doubt that it is, it will be difficult to move forward with our platform until we regain the trust and confidence of our constituents by enacting new lobbying reforms and enhanced penalties for those who break the public trust. These reforms will include new rules governing privately funded travel, new public disclosure requirements for lobbyists, and new requirements subjecting shadowy 527 organizations to the same rules and regulations as others who attempt to influence the legislative and political process.” - Majority Whip Blunt 1/19/06*
- *“It is my firm belief that, as public servants, we are obligated to protect the integrity of this great institution, and, most importantly, to represent the genuine interests of the voters who sent us here. We must re-examine the rules, so that the bad apples are exposed before they spoil the lot. Taking these steps will go a long way to lifting the cloud that threatens to obscure all of our efforts to deliver meaningful solutions to the real problems facing our fellow Americans.” - Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist (R-TN) 3/6/06*

March 29, 2006: The Senate passes “The Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act” (S. 2349). The bill does not reflect the lawmakers’ promises made earlier in 2006. The so-called reform bill falls short on many levels: it does nothing to break the lobbyist-money-lawmaker nexus; it does not prevent private interests from subsidizing and financing congressional travel; and does not establish a desperately needed independent Office of Public Integrity to enforce congressional ethics rules.

- *“I also want to thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for their cooperation in moving this legislation forward. Some say that we’ve moved*



too fast on this issue. Some say we've moved too slow. Some want changes to various provisions. This is not a perfect bill, but it is a step forward.” - Majority Leader Frist (R-TN) 3/29/06

April 2006: Skyrocketing gas prices, immigration and the war in Iraq draw attention from lobbying and ethics reform.

- *“Some Republican leaders assert that lawmakers are hearing little from constituents about the congressional corruption scandal, even though it has received considerable media attention. Jo Maney, spokeswoman for Rep. David Dreier (R-Calif.), a chief architect of the House ethics bill, said: ‘Many members have told him [Dreier] that they are not hearing about corruption and lobbying reform at home. They hear more about immigration, gas prices.’ Still, Dreier and Hastert ‘feel strongly’ that the ethics bill ‘is the right thing to do’ and that it will ‘improve the public’s perception of the integrity of the House of Representatives.’” - “No Outcry About Lobby Scandal, Lawmakers Say,” The Washington Post 4/27/06*

May 3, 2006: The House passes “The Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act” (H.R. 4975) by a vote of 217-213. The bill is widely criticized and contains almost none of the reforms outlined by House leadership in January.

- *“This legislation will hold lobbyists and Members accountable for their actions. The Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act will help restore Americans’ trust in their legislature, and I’m pleased a bipartisan group voted to solve a bipartisan problem.” - Majority Whip Blunt 5/3/06*
- *“The bill we passed today will reform the lobbying and earmark process to bring greater transparency and accountability to our nation’s Capitol and goes further than just prosecuting the bad actors. We have moved quickly in our reform minded commitment to getting this done. The 192 Democrats who voted against this bill made clear their opposition to our commitment to bring greater transparency and accountability to Washington and their contentment with business as usual.” - Speaker Hastert 5/3/06*

May 20, 2006: Representative William Jefferson’s (D-LA) congressional office is raided as part of the FBI’s investigation of the Congressman for bribery, wire fraud, bribery of a foreign official and conspiracy to bribe foreign officials.



May 23, 2006: Conferees for the lobbying and ethics reform bills are named in the Senate but not the House.

June 9, 2006: With investigations pending with the Justice Department and in Texas for election law violations, Rep. DeLay resigns from Congress. Leadership from both Houses say they hope to reach a final lobbying and ethics reform agreement before the July 4th recess.

- *“Today, we asked lobbying reform conferees to complete their final package before the Fourth of July recess. Lobbying and ethics reform remains an important priority for Congress. We are confident that the conferees will work hard and deliver a conference report that will build trust with the American people by making our government more transparent and accountable.” –Speaker Hastert and Majority Leader Frist joint statement 6/9/06*

July 26, 2006: Majority Leader Boehner indicates that lobbying and ethics reform is likely dead in the 109th Congress.

- *“If the House and Senate have not produced a final lobbying and ethics reform conference report by the time we return from our August district work period in September, the House will move to immediately adopt and implement a comprehensive earmark reform rules change independent of the ongoing lobbying and ethics reform discussions to ensure these new rules apply to all spending and tax measures that will go to the President’s desk this fall.” – Joint Statement of Speaker Hastert, Majority Leader Boehner and Rules Committee Chairman Dreier 7/26/06*

September 14, 2006: Unable to reach an agreement on the lobbying bills the House turns its attention to and ultimately passes minor revisions of earmarks.

- *“Today was an important day for the House as an institution. Passage of these earmark reforms is a sign that Republicans are returning to the reform agenda that closed the House Bank and House Post Office, ended decades of Democrat rule in Congress, and put us in the majority 12 years ago. Changing the way Washington does business starts with changing the way Congress does business.” –Majority Leader Boehner 9/14/06*

September 15, 2006: Rep. Bob Ney (R-OH), who had stepped down as the Chairman of the House Administration Committee, pleads guilty to conspiring to commit fraud, violating federal lobbying laws and making false statements.



- *“I have made serious mistakes and am sorry for them,” he said. “I know that this plea agreement will probably forever change the way people view my public service. I regret this very much.” – Rep. Ney 9/15/06*
- *“The illegal behavior that Congressman Bob Ney has admitted doing is unacceptable. I am glad he has recognized and accepted the consequences of his actions. My thoughts and prayers are especially with him and his family at this time.” –Speaker Hastert 9/15/06*

September 28, 2006: Republican and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committees hold nearly simultaneous fundraising events on Capitol Hill, in a last push to tap lobbyists for campaign contributions.

- *“This is a straight-out appeal to [lobbyists] to contribute to Republicans – to remind them what Republicans do not only for their specific industries but for the whole business community,’ said a GOP leadership aide.” – GOP Brass to Meet Lobbyists, Roll Call, 9/26/06*
- *“Top Democratic House aides are rallying their friends on K Street to open their wallets one final time this week before party operatives scatter to the campaign trail...Almost 150 lobbyists, a virtual who’s who of top downtown Democrats, are ponying up \$500 a head in personal money to be listed as sponsors on placards that will be displayed at the event.” – Democrats Last Call for K St. Dollars, Roll Call, 9/27/06*

September 29, 2006: Rep. Mark Foley (R-FL) resigns amid allegations of inappropriate conduct with House Pages. House staffers raise questions over a possible cover up by House leadership dating back to 2004.

September 30, 2006: 109th Congress recess without resolving the lobbying and ethics scandals. Congress is expected to return for a lame duck session.