



Opening Statement Chairman Jerrold Nadler Hearing on the Senate Approach to Lobbying Reform Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties March 1, 2007

Recent scandals, including criminal convictions, involving prominent lobbyists, Members of Congress, of the executive branch, and their staff, have heightened public awareness of the need to reform the way Congress does its business.

In keeping with our pledge to reform this institution, the Democratic Leadership put forward, and we adopted, changes to the House Rules in the first 100 hours of this Congress.

Today we begin consideration of proposed changes to the Lobby Disclosure Act. The Senate has already acted, with the passage of S. 1. The House is now beginning its consideration of these issues. In addition to the Senate bill, we also have a number of proposals put forward by members of this Committee, by other members of the House and by various activists. These proposals merit careful consideration.

It is my hope that this hearing will enlighten our efforts, and that we will be able to work together, on a bi-partisan basis, to advance a reform agenda.

Some of these issues are very difficult, but we have an obligation to deal with them, and to do it right. The American people sent a clear message in November that they want their government cleaned up. We ignore that message at our peril.

If the public loses confidence that the process of lawmaking is fair and open to all on an equal basis, that can only undermine respect for the rule of law.

I would just add that lobbyists are only one part of the problem. The core issue is the pervasive influence of money in politics.

So long as we have a political system in which office seekers must raise large sums of money from people with a direct interest in legislation, the regulation of lobbying, by itself, will not fully solve the problem. A lobbyist without a PAC has a hard time corrupting the process.

We must ensure that a private citizen without a PAC gets at least the same consideration as the powerful, moneyed interests. That is the ultimate goal of our work.

So, I want to welcome our witnesses today, and thank them for their testimony and their assistance.