
RESTORING HONESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN WASHINGTON

Rep. Henry A. Waxman

Over the last five years, public confidence in the federal government has plummeted. Growing government secrecy has bred suspicions about the actions of top officials at the same time that the revolving door on K Street has raised questions about the influence of special interests. The appointment of political cronies to key positions has called into question government competency, while the increasing politicization of science has undermined trust in regulatory decisions. Reports of enormous waste, fraud, and abuse have squandered both taxpayer dollars and public support.

Rep. Henry A. Waxman and the Democrats on the Government Reform Committee have developed six key proposals to restore government honesty and accountability. Their plan would:

- (1) **Ban secret meetings with lobbyists and close the revolving door.** Committee Democrats would require the disclosure of contacts between lobbyists and Executive Branch officials, ending the secret meetings used to develop key Administration policies, like the Vice President's energy plan. The legislation would also prohibit lobbyists who enter government from handing out favors to former clients by applying the prohibition on conflicts of interest to high-ranking officials who take actions affecting former clients or employers (H.R. 5112).
- (2) **Restore open government.** Committee Democrats would reverse the Bush Administration's assault on open government by restoring laws promoting transparency, including strengthening FOIA and promoting timely declassification of documents (H.R. 2331). In addition, they would ban government-sponsored covert propaganda and strengthen public disclosure of federally funded public-relations efforts (H.R. 373).
- (3) **Clean up federal contracting.** Committee Democrats would reform the acquisition practices of the federal government by promoting competition, limiting abuse-prone contracts, and increasing oversight (H.R. 3838 and the Clean Contracting Act (to be introduced)).
- (4) **Block the appointment of cronies.** Committee Democrats would require minimum qualifications for political appointees holding public safety positions, including management and leadership credentials and a superior achievement record (H.R. 3925).
- (5) **Take politics out of science.** Committee Democrats would prohibit the manipulation of science for political and ideological purposes and strengthen the integrity and independence of expert scientific committees (H.R. 839).
- (6) **Protect federal whistleblowers.** Committee Democrats would provide whistleblower protections to national security and contractor employees, while strengthening existing whistleblower protections for all federal employees (H.R. 1317 and H.R. 5112).

These six good government proposals are urgently needed to rebuild the public's faith in government. But all six proposals — even those with bipartisan support on the Government Reform Committee — have been blocked from floor consideration by the Republican leadership in the House.