

**US Senator Ken Salazar**  
**Floor Statement**  
January 9, 2007

Mr. President:

I rise to speak on Senate Bill Number 1, the package of ethics and lobbying reforms now before the Senate.

It is no coincidence that this is the first bill to come before the new Senate. This bill lays the foundation for everything that we hope to do in the months and years ahead. It does so by addressing three fundamental needs:

*First is the need to restore the people's faith in their government.*

Indeed, in the wake of the Jack Abramoff scandal, the conviction of former Congressman Duke Cunningham, and the various other allegations and investigations of improper influence-peddling in Washington, it is clear that the American people have lost faith in their government.

In case we didn't know it beforehand, that message was sent loud and clear by voters in the November elections. With this bill, we look to restore that lost faith, without which we cannot effectively conduct the people's business.

*Second is the need to bring greater transparency to government.*

As Justice Louis Brandeis said long-ago, "Sunshine is said to be the best of disinfectants." These words have particular resonance today, as we look to end the practice of holding one-party conference committees, of placing anonymous holds on legislation and nominations, and of slipping provisions into conference reports that were not passed by either chamber. With this bill, we look to replace these secretive practices with a more open and transparent Congress.

*Third is the need to curb the influence of special interests.*

When the American people see a revolving door between Congress and K Street lobbying firms, when they see members of Congress and staff treated to gifts and travel paid for by lobbyists, when they see legislation changed at the behest of special interests, they understandably roll their eyes. With this bill, we look to curb the influence of special interests in favor of the people's interests.

This bill is not perfect – and we will work this week to refine and improve it. For example, I would like to see the denial of federal pensions to members of Congress who are convicted of certain crimes – and I am proud to support an amendment by Senator

Kerry which would do just that. The likes of former Congressman Duke Cunningham should not be granted federal pensions.

I would also like to see greater transparency in the committee process – and I will offer an amendment on that issue later this week.

Finally, it is important to note that this bill also touches on ethics in the executive branch – by extending the revolving door for very senior executive branch employees from 1 to 2 years and by expressing the sense of the Senate that any applicable restrictions on Congressional branch employees should apply to the Executive and Judicial branches. We need to make sure that every branch of government has strong ethics rules – and I look forward to working with my colleagues to accomplish that goal in the coming months and it is my hope that the relevant committees address this issue in the near future.

Indeed, over the course of this debate, we will have the opportunity to address these and other important improvements to the bill. But I am confident that this bill will help us address the three needs I just mentioned in a number of important ways.

For example, the bill would:

- Ban all gifts, meals, and travel paid for by lobbyists.
- Require public disclosure, within 3 days, of any “hold” placed on a nomination or piece of legislation.
- Close the “revolving door” between Congress and K Street by extending the “cooling off” period for Members of Congress and stiffening the rules regarding the lobbying activity of former senior staff.
- Require that conference reports be made available to the public at least 48 hours before their consideration by the Senate.
- Require a list of earmarks in each bill, the identity of the Senators who proposed them, and their essential government purpose.

As a member of the Senate Ethics Committee, I am also pleased that the bill includes provisions which would:

- Require an annual report by the Committee with detailed statistics on the number of alleged violations and the status of complaints;
- Require the Committee to conduct mandatory ethics training for Senators and staff; and
- Create an independent commission to make recommendations on the effectiveness of Congressional ethics rules and lobbying disclosure laws.

It is important to note that these changes are necessary not because there is something inherently wrong or dishonorable about the process of petitioning the government. They are necessary because the American people have lost faith in their government and because our government should be more transparent and responsive.

So I commend the leadership, members of the Rules Committee, and members of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee, for their work on this bill.

This legislation is an important first-step towards restoring the faith of the American people in their government – and I look forward to the upcoming debate.

I yield the floor.