

A Package of Ethics Reforms for 115th Congress

I. Travel:

- a. Close the nonprofit loophole for lobbying entities while directing the House Ethics Committee to set up a certification process allowing a small number of independent entities (such as the Aspen Institute) to pay for travel related to educational events.
- b. Require full online disclosure of official and related travel.

II. Conflicts of Interest:

- a. Require House and Senate Ethics Committees to issue updated guidance and clarifications regarding actions that implicate conflicts of interest.
- b. Require online disclosure of job negotiations to the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate when there are two-way communications on employment prospects.

III. Campaign Activities while Congress is Meeting:

- a. Prohibit members of Congress from actively engaging in political fundraising and soliciting between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm on any day in which their house of Congress is meeting.
- b. Prohibit congressional staff from engaging in paid or unpaid campaign activity in connection with congressional elections while Congress is in session and the staffer is not on leave/vacation.
- c. Create cooling-off periods between a member's acceptance of a contribution from a lobbyist or their client and participating in a lobbying contact with that lobbyist or client.

IV. Revolving Door:

- a. Lengthen the existing two-year revolving door limitations for members of Congress.
- b. To be consistent with the Senate, extend the House revolving door restrictions to senior staff to prohibit lobbying contacts with the entire House rather than just their own office.

V. Enforcement:

- a. Give the Office of Congressional Ethics subpoena power.
- b. Clarify that the Committee on Ethics may not halt a review by the independent Office of Congressional Ethics unless it has already empaneled an investigative subcommittee to review the same allegations.
- c. Create an independent Office of Senate Ethics.
- d. Require each house of Congress to conduct random annual audits of office accounts.

VI. Gifts:

- a. Require disclosure of donors to any nonprofit organization established, maintained, controlled by or named after a member of Congress.
- b. Eliminate gift rules loopholes for public universities.

I. Travel

Close the nonprofit loophole for lobbying entities while directing the House Ethics Committee to set up a certification process allowing a small number of independent entities (such as the Aspen Institute) to pay for travel related to educational events.

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"Official travel for Members of Congress cost taxpayers \$12.5 million in 2014."

Travel is an especially valuable tool for those wishing to build relationships and foster goodwill with members of Congress, often providing important “face-time” with members and staff. In 2007, the 110th Congress passed the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act (HLOGA), which restricted lobbyists and foreign agents from paying for member travel. However, the measure included a loophole that allows lobbyists to effectively sponsor congressional travel for educational purposes. Now, rather than directly paying for travel, many lobbyists, foreign agents and their clients underwrite member travel by funneling funds through nonprofit organizations that are closely aligned with the client’s interests. In 2015, the House Clerk’s website reported 2,555 instances of travel paid for by nonprofits.

- In 2015, the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (known as SOCAR) funneled \$750,000 through nonprofit organizations based in the United States to conceal the source of the funding for 10 [members of Congress' trip to Azerbaijan](#).
- Since 2008, nonprofit groups connected with Fethullah Gülen, a leader of the Turkish opposition, funded over [200 trips for members of Congress](#)—all of them approved by the House Ethics Committee. These trips promoted a Turkish faith movement that the Turkish government perceives as a threat.
- Since 2001, The American Petroleum Institute has funded [22 congressional trips for conferences](#), “fact-finding,” and “dialogue.” For example, Rep. Corrine Brown (D-FL) and her husband took a three-night trip to Houston, TX valued at \$7,146, paid for by API.
- Every other year, the American Israel Education Foundation (an arm of AIPAC), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, sends dozens of lawmakers with staffers and family members on a [seven-day tour of Israel valued at \\$10,000 per person](#). This sponsoring organization is essentially indistinguishable from AIPAC, as the two groups share an address, employees and board members.

Require full online disclosure of official and related travel.

According to *USA Today*, in 2014, the cost of official travel by members of Congress came in at \$12.5 million, up from \$9.7 million in 2013. While travel by members of Congress can be a valuable means of learning about issues related to their official duties, there continue to be instances in which the expenditures of taxpayer funds appear to be extravagant. The best way to ensure accountability for such travel is transparency. Official travel reports are not provided on the internet in a searchable, sortable and downloadable database format. Similarly, the database for privately sponsored travel also falls short of this standard. Even though the Clerk of the House and Secretary of the Senate now post the database for privately sponsored travel on their websites and make the database available for download, key elements of the downloadable database are excluded, such as the cost of the trip. Both Senate and House rules should require full public disclosure of all congressional travel records — official as well as officially connected travel — in a searchable, sortable and downloadable format.

- In 2013, Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL) spent [\\$102,000 from his office funds on travel-related expenses](#).
- In just nine months in 2010, Harlan Watson, a Republican Committee staffer, took [committee-funded trips valued at \\$76,000](#).
- In 2009, former Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-HI) and Rep. Richard Shelby (R-AL), accompanied by their spouses, took [a four-day trip to France for the biennial Paris Air Show](#). The lawmakers flew on the Air Force's version of the Boeing 737, which costs \$5,700 an hour to operate, and stayed at the Intercontinental Paris Le Grand Hotel, which advertises rooms from \$460 a night.
- In 2008, Representatives Brian Baird (D-WA), Darlene Hooley (D-OR), Ben Chandler (D-KY), Bob Inglis (R-SC) and Frank Lucas (R-OK), took [a four-day trip using House Science and Technology Committee funds](#) to the Galapagos Islands with their wives to learn about climate change. The group incurred \$22,000 in dining and lodging expenses.

II. Conflicts of Interest

Require House and Senate Ethics Committees to issue updated guidance and clarifications regarding actions that implicate conflicts of interests.

In December 2012, the House Ethics Committee “recommended that conflict of interest rules be submitted to a task force for review” in order to more clearly define what constitutes a conflict of interest. Yet no further meaningful action was taken.

Additionally, a recent report from the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) found that the Congressional Fellowship Program sponsored by nongovernmental entities is not fully disclosed nor properly monitored often creating conflicts of interest.

- In 2015, Stephanie Teich-McGoldrick, a Congressional Fellow from Sandia National Laboratories, worked for the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. The POGO investigation found that she [worked on legislation directly affecting the Sandia National Laboratory while receiving a salary of \\$124,000 paid by Sandia.](#)
- In 2014, the Office of Congressional Ethics recommended that the House Ethics Committee investigate allegations that Rep. Tom Petri (R-WI) [negotiated on behalf of a contractor with whom he had large holdings.](#)
- In 2012, Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) helped lead the effort to [pass legislation that benefited him financially.](#) Rep. Cardoza supported significant tax breaks for racehorse owners. Once the tax breaks were implemented, he bought seven racehorses.
- In 2012, Rep. Mike Kelly (R-PA) sponsored a natural gas bill in the House. At the same time, Rep. Kelly’s wife was [negotiating a multimillion-dollar deal with Exxon from which she stood to benefit financially.](#)
- In 2011, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) faced allegations that she [supported a fuel subsidy proposal](#) that benefited a clean energy firm in which Rep. Pelosi and her husband had a large financial stake.
- In 2009, Rep. Sam Graves (R-MO), a member of the House Small Business Committee, arranged for a business associate to testify before Congress [without revealing his financial ties to the witness.](#) His associate had large holdings in the same energy company as Graves’ wife.

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Require online disclosure of job negotiations to the Clerk of the House or Secretary of the Senate when there are two-way communications on employment prospects.

Under current rules, members of Congress are required to disclose employment negotiations to the House Ethics Committee and Secretary of the Senate, but this information is not provided to the public in a meaningful or timely fashion. In the House, employment negotiations are publicly disclosed only when the member decides there is a conflict of interest. In the Senate, public disclosures are only provided once a member negotiates a specific salary. As a result, since 2008 there have been only nine employment negotiations made publicly available in the House and just a handful in the Senate. Job negotiation transparency is an important tool in preventing potential conflicts of interest and enhancing accountability.

- In 2012, Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) [negotiated job opportunities with a lobbying firm](#) before resigning his position in Congress.
- In 2011 Rusty Roberts, Rep. John Mica's (R-FL) Chief of Staff, [abruptly left his position on the Hill to accept a job](#) as managing director of the transportation practice at BGR Government Affairs.
- In 2003, Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA) was a chief negotiator of the Medicare Act of 2003. This Act greatly benefitted drug companies. Within a year of the Act's passage, Rep. Tauzin announced his retirement and [accepted a job at PhRMA \(a lobbying arm of the pharmaceutical industry\) the day after his term ended in January 2005.](#)

III. Campaign Activities While Congress is Meeting

Prohibit members of Congress from actively engaging in political fundraising and soliciting between 9:00 am and 6:00 pm on any day in which their chamber of Congress is meeting.

Many members of Congress spend four to five hours per day fundraising, or more. In 2013, a model daily schedule provided to incoming Democratic members of Congress showed the DCCC pushing members to schedule four hours of “call time” while in their D.C. office. Furthermore, it is suggested that one hour be set aside for “strategic outreach” during which time members could solicit more donations. Soliciting donations during “work hours” prevents the member of Congress from performing important constituent duties and legislative tasks.

“Many Members of Congress spend as much as 4 – 5 hours per day fundraising.”

“Lobbyists and their clients have spent more than \$30 million on each election cycle since 2006.”

- Former Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) estimated that during his 12 years in Congress, he [attended more than 1,600 fundraisers](#) and spent 4,200 hours calling donors.
- Former Rep. David Jolly (R-FL) said he was told by Republican Party leaders that his responsibility, as a sitting member of Congress, was to [raise \\$18,000 per day at party call centers](#) just down the block from Congress.

Prohibit congressional staff from engaging in paid or unpaid campaign activity in connection with congressional elections while Congress is in session and the staffer is not on leave/vacation.

Current law prohibits members of Congress and their staff from soliciting funds in their office building, using official member accounts for campaign activities, using government equipment (such as phones) for campaign-related activities, or from performing campaign activities during official office hours. Yet in reality, this prohibition is a fiction. Many congressional staffers spend significant amounts of time on campaign-related activities with vaguely drawn lines between official and campaign business. Allowing congressional staff members to engage in campaign activities is tantamount to using taxpayer-allocated funds to subsidize a campaign and presents a potential conflict of interest.

- In 2011, Shirley Cooks, Chief of Staff to Rep. Laura Richardson (D-CA), was found by the House Ethics Committee to have used her influence to [unlawfully coax congressional staffers](#) to engage in campaign-related activities, telling one staffer that “she would

probably not have a job” unless she agreed to work on Rep. Richardson’s campaign.

- In 2007, the Department of Justice was asked to investigate Rep. David Scott (D-GA), alleging he [illegally directed his staff to engage in campaign-related activities](#). One of Rep. Scott’s staffers reported that Rep. Scott designated certain employees to only perform campaign work, often during official office hours, while using government equipment.
- In 2006, staffers to Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) reported that they were assigned to [work on his political campaign while on government time](#), in government offices. They reported using government phones, printers, fax machines and mailing lists to solicit campaign contributions, organize fundraisers and canvass for voters.

Create a cooling-off period between a member’s acceptance of a contribution from a lobbyist or their client and participating in a lobbying contact with that lobbyist or client.

Lobbyists play a key role in campaign fundraising, especially as bundlers — individuals who solicit and collect contributions and receive the political credit for delivering amounts much greater than a lobbyist’s individual contribution limit. A 2011 American Bar Association (ABA) report from the Task Force on Lobbying Disclosure found that current law fails to address the “leverage that lobbyists can acquire, and the unseemly appearances they create, when they participate in campaign fundraising for the same members of Congress whom they also lobby.” The ABA Task Force proposed a cooling-off period between a lobbying contact and campaign fundraising activities by a lobbyist in order to prevent corruption and the appearance of corruption.

- In 2014, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and Sen. Mark Pryor (D-AR) received the most [campaign contributions](#) from lobbyists at more than \$500,000 each.
- For the 2016 election cycle, it is reported that the WPP (Wire and Plastic Products) and Harbour Groups have [each spent more than a million dollars on contributions](#), more than any other lobbying group.
- Since 2011, Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC) has received \$157,551 from the coal mining industry, \$712,852 from oil and gas interests and \$815,277 from electric utility companies. At the same time, Sen. Burr [frequently met with lobbyists who represented those donors](#).

IV. Revolving Door

Lengthen the existing two-year revolving door limitations for members of Congress to three years.

The “revolving door” refers to the common practice of outgoing members of Congress becoming registered lobbyists or “strategic advisors” for private industries - often industries with which they frequently worked while in Congress. According to OpenSecrets, of the 75 outgoing members of the 113th Congress, 27 are now directly

involved in lobbying. By contrast, in 1974, only three percent of former lawmakers took jobs as lobbyists after leaving Congress. According to a report from The Nation and Republic Report, a member of Congress turned lobbyist can expect an average pay raise of 1,452 percent, further incentivizing the revolving door practice. Current law states members of the House must wait only one year, and members of the Senate two years, before they may begin lobbying Congress. At the very least, both chambers should have a cooling-off period of a full congressional session. Better yet, extending the revolving door limitation to three or four years would strengthen the cooling-off period which is intended to reduce the timeliness of any insider information a former member may have and to reduce the likelihood of conflicts of interest.

“Members of Congress turned lobbyists can expect an average pay raise of 1,452 percent.”

“In 1974, only three percent of former lawmakers took jobs as lobbyists after leaving Congress. This number is now over 50 percent.”

- In 2015, Rep. Jim Matheson (R-UT) [joined the lobbying firm Squire Patton Boggs just weeks after resigning from the House](#). His first clients included the Coalition for Fair Access to Credit and large energy companies, which were subject to new regulations from the House Energy and Commerce Committee on which Rep. Matheson served while in Congress.
- In 2012, amidst one of the worst droughts in California history, Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA) [resigned from Congress and just two days later began working for a lobbying firm](#) handling agribusiness clients. When his two-year “cooling-off” period ended, he immediately began lobbying issues related to water and drought policy under the jurisdiction of the House Agriculture Committee of which he was once a member.
- In 2007, former Sen. Trent Lott (R-MS) [resigned from Congress and 20 days later formed his own lobby firm](#), the Breaux Lott Leadership Group, with former Sen. John Breaux (D-LA). Lott’s resignation in December came just weeks before a looming 2008 Senate ethics deadline which prohibited sitting Senators from lobbying for two years after leaving office. Three weeks after resigning, Sen. Lott began lobbying the Senate on behalf of clients such as Goldman Sachs, Boeing and FedEx.
- In 2005, former Rep. Billy Tauzin (R-LA) [became president and CEO of PhRMA just two](#)

[days after he retired from Congress.](#) As Chair of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, Rep. Tauzin was one of the chief architects of the Medicare bill that outlawed negotiating lower drug prices, greatly benefiting PhRMA.

To be consistent with the Senate, extend the House revolving door restrictions to senior staff to prohibit lobbying contacts with the entire House rather than just their own office.

According to OpenSecrets, from 2010 – 2012, 377 former House staffers registered as lobbyists. The 377 staffers included 50 legislative assistants, 32 chiefs of staff, 26 legislative directors and 22 staff assistants. By law, former high-ranking congressional staffers are prohibited from directly lobbying their former bosses until their one-year “cooling-off” period has ended. However, many former staff members evade the spirit of this lobbying restriction by lobbying committees or other House members, but not directly lobbying their former bosses. The purpose of the “cooling-off” period is to ensure that insider information to which the staffer was once privy is less pertinent to the issue being lobbied, while also ensuring that the relationships fostered between the former staffers and those involved with the lobbied legislation are less likely to influence the legislative outcome.

- In 2014, after serving as a top staffer for Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA) and Speaker John Boehner (R-OH), Jeff Dobrozsi [resigned to become a lobbyist for Apple Inc.](#) While he waited a year to lobby his former bosses, he immediately began to lobby House Republicans on corporate and international tax reform policies.
- In 2014, after serving as a senior staffer to Rep. Robert Wittman (R-VA), a member of the House Armed Services Committee, Mary Springer became a lobbyist for DRS Technologies, a firm involved in defense contracting. Ms. Springer registered as a lobbyist immediately after her resignation, and [one year later began lobbying the same legislation she had helped craft](#) for Rep. Wittman.
- In 1994, Ann Eppard, Chief of Staff for Rep. Bud Shuster (R-PA) for 22 years, [left her position and created a lobbying firm.](#) While she did not contact Rep. Shuster’s congressional office, she lobbied the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee of which he was chairman from 1994 – 2001.

V. Enforcement

Give the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) subpoena power.

The OCE is charged with investigating allegations of wrongdoing against House members and staff. Upon making a determination that there is a possible violation of House ethics rules, the OCE refers the matter to the House Committee on Ethics for further review and disciplinary action. However, without subpoena power, the OCE faces substantial obstacles in fulfilling its investigatory mandate.

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"For nine straight years the Senate Ethics Committee has imposed no disciplinary sanctions against any senators."

- In 2016, the OCE investigated Rep. Roger Williams (R-TX) for introducing an amendment into a must-pass highway bill that would have exempted car dealers, such as himself, from certain safety recall standards. The OCE [had no authority](#) to compel information from Rep. Williams, who was uncooperative and refused to provide the OCE with the information it requested as part of the investigation.
- In 2016, Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA) was under investigation by the OCE on charges of trading official access and favors for campaign contributions. The OCE labeled Honda's campaign manager, David Gerven, a ["non-cooperating"](#) witness throughout the investigation. The OCE recommended to the House Ethics Committee that Gerven be subpoenaed because the OCE had no subpoena power itself.
- In 2015, the OCE investigated Rep. Alan Grayson (D-FL) regarding his family [hedge fund](#), as well as political activities related to his Senate campaign. Rep. Grayson claimed the OCE was operating as a partisan agency determined to hurt his Senate bid. Without subpoena power, the OCE could not compel Rep. Grayson to provide accurate information needed for the investigation.

Clarify that the Committee on Ethics may not halt a review by the independent Office of Congressional Ethics unless it has already empaneled an investigative subcommittee to review the same allegations.

Since the creation of OCE, there has been an ongoing struggle, often behind-the-scenes, between the OCE and the House Ethics Committee over the use of Committee Rule 18(a), which allows the Committee to perform informal fact-gathering in order to decide whether or not to conduct an investigation. Rule 18(a) has, however, been used by the Committee to order the OCE to cease its investigation of a potential transgression. For the OCE to effectively perform its job, it must be given the opportunity to investigate fully, without interference from the Ethics Committee unless the Committee is conducting a more thorough and transparent investigation through an investigative subcommittee.

- In 2013, the House Ethics Committee, pursuant to rule 18(a), formally requested the OCE end its review of questionable [member trips to Azerbaijan](#). The OCE was in the process of conducting an investigation when the letter was sent, which effectively ended the investigation.

Create an independent Office of Senate Ethics.

The Senate Ethics Committee is widely regarded as a black hole for allegations of violations of Senate ethics rules. When the Office of Congressional Ethics was established on the House side, a similar effort failed in the Senate. The Committee's failure to act has led many to consider it ineffective, more concerned with protecting the reputations of senators than actually investigating potential transgressions and enacting appropriate sanctions. With no meaningful transparency in the Senate ethics process, there is no way for the public to assess whether or not the process is working. An Office of Senate Ethics, with subpoena power, should be created to independently investigate allegations of ethics violations. In turn, the Senate Ethics Committee would adjudicate the cases forwarded to it by this office.

- According to a [2016 USA Today story](#), for nine straight years the Senate Ethics Committee had imposed no disciplinary sanctions against any senators. Since 2007, the Committee has received 613 allegations of wrongdoing and has summarily dismissed more than 90 percent of such allegations. Only 75 had even received a preliminary investigation.
- In 2013, the Senate Ethics Committee investigated Sen. David Vitter (R-LA) over his legislative hold on a major energy bill and threat to repeal federal contributions to senators' healthcare plans. The Committee [decided to dismiss charges and not release the files to the public](#). The only reason the scandal came to light was through an internal leak.
- In 2012, Sen. Tim Johnson (D-SD) sought to add [millions of dollars to a Pentagon program called Starbase](#). Published reports revealed that Sen. Johnson's wife had evaluated the program as a contracted employee and stood to benefit from it financially. The Senate Ethics Committee determined that this action did not pose any conflict of interest, and declined to investigate the matter.
- In 2012, Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) was involved in the [multi-million-dollar cover-up](#) of Sen. John Ensign's (R-NV) extramarital affair, acting as an intermediary between Sen. Ensign and his mistress' family. Sen. Ensign resigned amidst the investigation. However, Sen. Coburn never faced disciplinary measures by the Senate Ethics Committee for his role in the cover-up.

Require each house of Congress to conduct random annual audits of member Representational Allowance (MRA) and Senators' Official Personnel and Office Expense Account (SOPOEA) accounts.

House MRA accounts and Senate SOPOEA accounts are specific budgets, usually about \$1.17 – 1.80 million in the House and \$3.1 – 4.76 million in the Senate, assigned to each member to support their official and representational duties for their respective district or state, such as funding a congressional staff and maintaining an office. According to Roll Call, members in competitive districts spend, on average, three times more on MRA funded mailings and mass-communications than do members in safe districts. Requiring the House and the Senate to conduct random annual audits would help to uncover cases of improper use early on and also provide a disincentive for others to engage in the misuse of MRA and SOPOEA accounts.

- In 2015, Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL), who resigned amidst charges of ethics violations, used his [MRA account to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars](#) in taxpayer money to fly on private jets, issue fake mileage reimbursements, purchase concert tickets, and make “Downton Abbey-inspired” office renovations.
- In 2015, Rep. Rod Blum (R-IA) spent [one-third of his MRA allowance \(\\$425,365\)](#) on mass-mailings, ads and automated phone calls — raising allegations that the expenditures were related to campaign purposes in his swing district, an unlawful use of MRA funds.
- In 2010, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) was found by the House Ethics Committee to have [used funds from his House MRA account](#) to pay for expenses related to the operation of the Rangel Center at the City College of New York.
- In 2009, Rep. Linda and Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA) were involved in a payroll scandal involving the [embezzlement of MRA funds](#) by a congressional aide, Caroline Valdez, and the “sharing” of MRA funds between the sisters in an attempt to make-up for the lost funds, with Rep. Linda Sanchez putting her sister’s staffers on her own payroll.

VI. Gifts

Require disclosure of donors to any nonprofit established, maintained, controlled by or named after a member of Congress.

Nonprofit organizations named after or controlled by a Member of Congress are not currently required to disclose the names of donors funding the organizations. Donations to these connected organizations, often millions of dollars, raises the possibility of potential conflicts of interest and provides an avenue for buying and selling influence and access to the politician. While these foundations may perform valuable and worthwhile work, contributions to these nonprofits are widely viewed as an effective means to “get on the radar screen” of powerful Members of Congress.

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“Many state universities rely significantly on federal grants for funding, and lobby for especially valuable earmarks from Members of Congress.”

- In 2016, political backers of Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) [launched a multimillion-dollar fundraising campaign to solicit funds for the creation of the nonprofit](#) Orrin G. Hatch Foundation. The fundraising operation has ties to Sen. Hatch’s political fundraiser, Heather Larrison, and includes Utah-based donors, K Street lobbyists and major corporations representing the pharmaceutical and technology industries. Many of these donors were lobbyists who represent clients with interests before the Senate Finance Committee of which Sen. Hatch is the chairman, creating a potential conflict of interest.
- In 2010, Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY) was found by the House Ethics Committee to have [solicited donations](#) for the Charles B. Rangel Center for Public Policy at the City College of New York. The Committee determined that accepting these donations from undisclosed donors likely influenced the performance of his governmental duties.
- From 2001 – 2009, while serving as a senator from New York, Hillary Clinton’s (D-NY) husband ran the Clinton Foundation, [actively soliciting and accepting contributions from individuals who had business interests before Congress](#). Between 2015 and 2016, almost half of the major donors backing Ready for Hillary, a group that promoted her 2016 presidential run, as well as nearly half her bundlers (the fundraisers who solicited and pooled funds for her 2008 campaign) gave at least \$10,000 to the Foundation directly or indirectly through foundations and companies.
- The Mitch McConnell Center for Political Leadership is housed at the University of Louisville. In the mid-1990s, [the Center received a \\$500,000 donation](#) from Ashland Inc., a group whose founder is also one of Sen. Mitch McConnell’s (R-KY) largest campaign contributors. In 2010, Sen. McConnell pushed and voted for a defense spending bill that included a \$500,000 earmark for Ashland Inc. Additionally, William

Street, a former executive at Brown-Forman Corp., has donated tens of thousands of dollars to both McConnell's campaign and the Center. In 2000, McConnell sponsored a successful amendment to an agriculture spending bill to help protect organic grape growers and wine producers, greatly benefiting Brown-Forman Wines.

- In the 1990s, then Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole (R-KS) established the Dole Foundation for People with Disabilities. [The Foundation raised \\$1.25 million from wealthy donors](#) while Sen. Dole was in office. More than 65 percent of the Foundation's backers, including AT&T, US Tobacco and Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance, were also large campaign contributors to Sen. Dole's campaign committee. In 1996, Senator Dole helped create the Better America Foundation, which laid the groundwork for his 1996 presidential bid, providing staff, resources and donors. The donors to the Better America Foundation remained anonymous

Eliminate gift rules loopholes for public universities.

Lobbyists and lobbying entities are forbidden from directly giving “anything of value” to members of Congress and their staff. However, public universities are exempt from this rule. Public universities often provide valuable gifts to members and their staff, particularly tickets to sporting events. The monetary value of these gifts can exceed thousands of dollars. Many state universities rely significantly on federal grants for funding, and lobby for especially valuable earmarks from members of Congress.

- In 2014, Rep. Billy Long (R-MO) asked a University of Missouri lobbyist for [14 tickets to an upcoming football game](#). Though the game was virtually sold out, the lobbyist responded promptly to the email asking “Will we be mailing the tickets down to Karen in Springfield like we've done in the past?” That year, according to OpenSecrets, the University of Missouri spent \$270,000 on lobbying efforts in Congress.
- The University of Florida offers lawmakers a blanket invitation to attend as many football games as they wish. Senator Bill Nelson (D-FL), for example, sat in the University of Florida [presidential suite at least seven times between 2012 and 2014](#). According to OpenSecrets, in that time, the University of Florida registered lobbyists spent \$510,000 on lobbying efforts. Prior to that, in 2010, Sen. Nelson sponsored earmarked amendments for the University of Florida totaling \$2.2 million.
- In 2012, the chief of staff to Rep. James Moran (D-VA) requested tickets to an upcoming Virginia Tech football game from the University, and was [seated in the President's box](#). A lobbyist representing Virginia Tech (which according to OpenSecrets spent \$110,000 on lobbying efforts that year) wrote “we need the member of Congress [Rep. Moran] for a lot of reasons and they [Moran's staff] are very helpful to us.” In fiscal year 2010, for example, Rep. Moran was responsible for sponsoring earmarks that provided \$1.6 million to Virginia Tech.