

Murphy Again Leads Newly-Elected Democrats' Call on Congress for Comprehensive Ethics Reform

As the U.S. House of Representatives takes up a lobbying reform bill today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) led a group of newly-elected Democrats to speak out on the floor of the House this morning to call on Congress to move forward with comprehensive ethics reform.

Contact: Kristen Bossi
(202) 225-4476

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As the U.S. House of Representatives takes up a lobbying reform bill today, Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5) led a group of newly-elected Democrats to speak out on the floor of the House this morning to call on Congress to move forward with comprehensive ethics reform. Murphy renewed his call for a nonpartisan, independent entity that will vet, initiate, and conduct Congressional investigations.

"Our current ethics process does not work and it feeds the perception that politicians spend too much time and effort watching their own backs. The danger for all of us is that the longer one spends here in Washington, the more ownership you take over the very system you once ran against. But it must be fixed, and it just may fall on the newest members of this body to do the mending," said Murphy.

Murphy has been leading a group of newly-elected Democrats on ethics reform. In May, he organized more than 20 of his newly-elected Democratic colleagues in a press conference to call on Congress to act on ethics reform. Murphy spoke out today as the U.S. House of Representatives took up the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act. This bill is intended to increase and expand disclosure on the interactions between lobbyists and legislators, but it does not address how Congress should police itself.

"The lobbying reform bill we are taking up today reduces the influence of outside interests on Congress, but we need to recommit ourselves to cleaning up our own House by reforming the House ethics enforcement process. People in the Fifth District of Connecticut and in every other district in America won't believe in their Congress again until they know we can police ourselves," said Murphy.

Currently, Members of Congress can bring ethics complaints to the Ethics Committee, comprised of sitting Members, who then decide if the complaint warrants an investigation. If an investigation is considered necessary, then the Committee does the digging, and determines whether punishment is needed.

Unfortunately, Congress has been plagued by scandals in recent years, and the freshman class wants to address the structural flaws in the current process. However, many Members of Congress are hesitant to support comprehensive reform to the ethics process.

Earlier this year, the House leadership appointed a bipartisan Special Task Force on Ethics Enforcement to determine how to handle ethics claims. Murphy and his newly-elected colleagues are concerned because this task force has not released its recommendations on whether to appoint an outside investigator for claims against Members of Congress. This report was supposed to be released in late May. If Congress does not return in September with an ethics reform proposal on the calendar for consideration, Murphy intends to begin working on legislation to address the problem with other newly-elected Democrats.

"Reform isn't easy. Not the landmark bill we will pass today or the needed ethics reform to come. But nothing worthwhile ever is," said Murphy.

#