



REP. HENRY A. WAXMAN
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
APRIL 6, 2006

Bill Summary

The Executive Branch Reform Act of 2006

On April 6, 2006, the Committee on Government Reform reported the Executive Branch Reform Act of 2006 to the full House by a vote of 32 to 0. This legislation, which was introduced by Committee Chairman Tom Davis and Committee Ranking Member Henry Waxman, would enact landmark “good government” reform.

Ending Secret Meetings Between Lobbyists and Executive Branch Officials. The legislation stops the practice of secret meetings between lobbyists and Executive Branch officials by requiring all political appointees and senior officials in federal agencies and the White House to report the contacts they have with lobbyists and other private parties seeking to influence official government action. The reports, which will be filed quarterly and maintained on a searchable database at the Office of Government Ethics, must disclose the dates of meetings, the parties involved, and the subject matters discussed. Only four officials are exempted from the reporting requirements: the President, the Vice President, and their two chiefs of staff.

Closing the Revolving Door Between Lobbyists and Government. For the first time, the legislation creates a federal ban to prevent lobbyists who enter government from handing out favors to their former clients. Under the bill, lobbyists and executives appointed to high government positions will be deemed to have a prohibited conflict of interest if they take official actions affecting their former clients or employers within two years of entering government. No conflict-of-interest waivers can be granted without the approval of the Office of Government Ethics. In addition, government officials will be prohibited from negotiating future employment with private interests who are affected by their official actions. Officials who leave government to become lobbyists would not be able to lobby their former colleagues for two years (current law has only a one-year ban).

Closing the Revolving Door Between Contractors and Government. For the first time, executives who worked for private contractors will be barred from awarding contracts to their former employers when they enter government. The bill also closes multiple loopholes in the law governing when government procurement officials can be hired by companies to whom they awarded contracts.

Providing Protection to National Security Whistleblowers. The legislation would enact whistleblower protections for national security personnel. Currently, federal employees who

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH REFORM ACT OF 2006

work on national security issues have no effective recourse if they are the victims of retaliation after disclosing abuses. The bill would give these national security officials protections equivalent to those that other federal employees have.

Ending the Use of “Pseudo-Classifications.” The bill advances the cause of open government by eliminating the use of unregulated “pseudo-classifications” such as “sensitive but unclassified” or “for official use only.” The legislation would require the development of regulations and standards governing the use of any information control designations by federal agencies. Any use of administrative designations to withhold unclassified information from the public would be banned unless authorized by statute or the new regulations.

Banning Covert Propaganda. The bill addresses the growing problem of government-sponsored covert propaganda by requiring the federal government to disclose its role in funding or disseminating messages to the American public. There would be no more Armstrong Williamses if this bill becomes law.

Other Executive Branch Reforms. Ranking Member Waxman has introduced three other reform proposals: an open government bill (H.R. 2331), a bill to halt the growing politicization of science (H.R. 839), and a bill to end cronyism in government (H.R.3925). Chairman Davis and Rep. Waxman have agreed to continue to work on these issues and to bring them before the Committee for a vote before the Memorial Day Recess.