



January 4, 2023

On behalf of the Campaign Legal Center (CLC), we are writing to urge members of the 118th Congress to revise language in the proposed House Rules package that will weaken the U.S. Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) to the point that it will not be able to perform its essential core function: providing oversight and accountability in Congress.

OCE provides independent, nonpartisan oversight and accountability, which increases the public's trust in the U.S. House of Representatives and its members. OCE is Congress' only independent investigative body, and therefore one of the only safeguards against corruption in the House of Representatives. It is essential to protect and preserve the efficient functioning of OCE.

The proposed rules package severely curtails the ability of OCE to do the job it exists to do. First, Sec. 4 (d)(6) of the proposed rule forces three of the four Democrats who sit on the eight-member board to vacate their positions immediately because they would be serving beyond the newly imposed eight-year term limit. Filling these vacancies cannot be done quickly and leaving these posts empty would hamstring OCE's ability to efficiently conduct investigations and publish reports.

Second, Sec. 4(d)(7) would require OCE to hire its staff for the 118th Congress within 30 days of the adoption of the rule. This provision essentially limits any hiring for the office, including investigative staffers, to an impossibly brief period that would make it extremely difficult to rigorously assess candidates for these high-stakes jobs. Additionally, the 30-day hiring period applies to the entire 118th Congress, meaning that regardless of when a vacancy at the OCE occurs under this rule, the position cannot be filled.

Together these changes severely weaken OCE to the point where the office would struggle to perform its core function. Past attempts to gut OCE have not only been detrimental to the public's trust in Congress, but those moves have also been politically damaging and met with widespread public backlash. There is no reason to think this time will be any different.

Campaign Legal Center and 13 other partners recently [asked](#) the leaders of the U.S. House to both reauthorize and strengthen OCE. This proposed rule attempts to dismantle one of the only ways members of Congress are held accountable for ethics violations. **We strongly urge this Congress to reverse course and remove Sec.**

4(d)(6) and Sec. 4(d)(7) from the House rules proposal so that the Office of Congressional Ethics maintains its full strength.

If you have any questions or would like any further background information, please do not hesitate to contact Jo Deutsch, Director, Legislative Strategy at jdeutsch@campaignlegal.org.

Sincerely,

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