

The Hon. Paul Ryan
Speaker of the House
U.S. Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

December 21, 2016

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
233 Cannon House Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan and Minority Leader Pelosi:

We are writing to express our gratitude for the work done by the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and to encourage both of your offices to ensure its uninterrupted operations in the 115th Congress by re-authorizing the agency in the new year and filling the vacant seat on the board.

Our organizations and scholars include: Campaign for Accountability, Campaign Legal Center, Center for Responsive Politics, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), Common Cause, Demand Progress, Democracy 21, Issue One, James A. Thurber, Judicial Watch, League of Women Voters, National Taxpayers Union, Norman J. Ornstein, OpenTheGovernment.org, Public Citizen, Taxpayers for Common Sense, Thomas E. Mann

OCE is one of the stellar ethics accomplishments of the House of Representatives, first established in 2008. The agency has functioned successfully ever since. By providing limited oversight over the ethics process by a qualified and neutral agency, OCE has helped change a secretive and oft-perceived moribund ethics enforcement process into a reasonably more accountable and active system. To the credit of both congressional parties, the congressional ethics process is no longer viewed as merely a means to sweep problems under the rug.

OCE cannot make recommendations about whether an ethics violation has occurred, cannot judge a case, and cannot sanction a member for ethics violations. But the agency can conduct investigations and compile useful evidence and reports for further consideration by the House Ethics Committee. The agency provides a critical means for oversight and accountability, which had previously been lacking.

The agency must be re-authorized in the adoption of House rules at the beginning of each congressional session. The House has consistently re-authorized OCE with little dispute and strong bipartisan support. Our organizations fully expect that the House will again re-authorize the agency for the next session and appoint a full board, but we wanted to call your attention to the matter.

Your leadership in the establishment and maintenance of the OCE has resulted in a marked improvement in the House ethics enforcement process. We urge you to continue this leadership in the next Congress.

Respectfully Submitted,

Campaign for Accountability
Campaign Legal Center
Center for Responsive Politics
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Common Cause
Demand Progress
Democracy 21
Issue One
James A. Thurber
Judicial Watch
League of Women Voters
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