

July 8, 2019

Open Letter in Support of Stronger Ethics for a More Effective Pentagon to House Committee on Rules

We the undersigned organizations urge you to support five amendments to the [National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2020](#) (NDAA FY20; H.R. 2500) to strengthen ethics laws and shine a light on potentially dangerous conflicts of interest at the Pentagon.

The American people should have confidence that national security officials are making decisions based on what's best for the national defense of the country. Unfortunately, our current system allows private interests to be put ahead of protecting national interests. Most voters support reforms like these¹ and have a right to know who is seeking to influence the Pentagon—whether they're foreign governments or big defense contractors. That's why Congress should take concrete steps now to clean up Washington by passing these commonsense ethics reforms for the Pentagon.

- **Amendment #208** – Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) – Retired military officers who work for foreign governments are already required to receive permission from their military service and the State Department. This amendment would require annual public reporting to see which retired military officers are on foreign payrolls.
- **Amendment #226** – Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) – Government Accountability Office found 52 contractors employed 2,435 former Department of Defense (DoD) senior and acquisition officials who had “previously served as generals, admirals, senior executives, program managers, contracting officers, or in other acquisition positions which made them subject to restrictions on their post-DOD employment.”² This amendment would increase disclosure by defense contractors about the contacts between their employees who are former senior DoD officials and the Pentagon.
- **Amendment #394** – Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) – In the NDAA FY08, Senator John McCain led an effort to require DoD to maintain a database of defense officials who leave to work for defense contractors. This amendment would make the Pentagon's existing revolving door database available to the public online and extend the post-employment information in the database from two to four years.
- **Amendment #555** – Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) – Under existing law, senior Air Force acquisition officials can award contracts to defense contractors like Boeing and then join the company afterwards as long as they aren't going to the specific division at the company that received the contract. This amendment would close the loopholes in the existing one or two-year cooling off periods to prevent government officials from going to work for *any division or department* of a giant contractor they contracted with on behalf of the Pentagon, and likewise would prevent former contractor employees from overseeing their former employer after becoming a federal official. It also requires contractors to certify ethics compliance of former DoD senior officials and flag officers in their employ.
- **Amendment #556** – Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN), Rep. Speier (D-CA) – President Trump's [ethics executive order](#) requires his appointees to agree to a lifetime foreign lobbying ban. This amendment would require DoD, State Department and Treasury senior officials to seek permission before they go to work for foreign governments and political parties.

We support reforms like these because a government *by* the people needs to work *for* the people—and for our national security. These reforms are practical, not political. We urge both Democrats and Republicans to set aside partisan politics and stand up for a more ethical and effective national defense now.

¹ Politico/Morning Consult found 77% of registered voters named “Passing an anti-corruption bill that would rein in the influence of money and lobbying in Washington” as a top or important concern (See page 131 [here](#)).

² Government Accountability Office, *Defense Contracting: Post-Government Employment of Former DOD Officials Needs Greater Transparency*, May 21, 2008, Executive Summary. <https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08485.pdf>

Sincerely,

Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AKPIRG)
Center for International Policy
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Common Cause
CREDO
Demand Progress
Essential Information
Global Witness
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Liberty Coalition
London Center for Public Policy
National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies
New Mexicans for Money Out of Politics
Open Society Policy Center
Open the Government
Peace Action
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Public Citizen
Senior Executives Association (SEA)
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)

cc: Speaker Nancy Pelosi; House Armed Services Committee