

Groups Urge Support for the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE)

November 22, 2024

Dear Speaker Johnson and Leader Jeffries:

As the 118th Congress comes to a close and after overwhelming majorities of Americans continue to support increased ethics and accountability measures, we write in strong support of the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and encourage you to codify it into law. However, even if it is not codified into law, at the minimum, we urge you to maintain its continued existence and not weaken it in the 119th Congress because voters demanded accountability, ethics, and the rule of law, all of which the OCE works to achieve.

The OCE was created after several bribery and corruption scandals that resulted in numerous House members resigning or going to prison. In its 15-plus years of existence, the Office of Congressional Ethics has served as an independent watchdog to provide nonpartisan oversight and accountability in the House of Representatives. It has referred for further investigation an almost equal number of Democratic and Republican Members, and the OCE helped fix a broken ethics process.

For far too long, the House Ethics Committee was a place where scandals were swept under the rug and ignored in a largely bipartisan way. Both Republicans and Democrats would frequently look the other way and ignore transgressions from the other party with a mutual understanding that both sides would do the same. This process created distrust for Congress among much of the public.

Alternatively, the OCE increases public confidence in the House of Representatives and its members. To ensure it can fully continue to root out misconduct, the OCE should ideally be codified into law, but at a minimum, we ask that you preserve the OCE. The existence of the OCE is one of the key safeguards against corruption in the House of Representatives.

Instead of weakening the OCE, we urge you to work together to maintain and strengthen this important independent watchdog in the 119th Congress and beyond to ensure that the public has faith and confidence that Congress is working in the public interest.

Sincerely,

Common Cause
Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Democracy 21
Issue One
Project on Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen