

September 4, 2014

Hon. John Boehner
Speaker of the House
1101 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Nancy Pelosi
House Minority Leader
235 Cannon HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Kevin McCarthy
House Majority Leader
2421 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Steny Hoyer
House Minority Whip
1705 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Boehner, Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McCarthy and Minority Whip Hoyer:

We are writing to urge you to publicly and expeditiously announce your intent to continue the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) for the 114th Congress. The OCE has amassed an outstanding record of bipartisan ethics enforcement and has significantly improved the House ethics process. While we are aware that you will no doubt hear from some skeptics in both of your caucuses who would prefer to do away with the OCE, we urge you to reject this short-sighted viewpoint which is exactly the "above-the-law" attitude that helps fuel public distrust of a Congress whose approval levels have hit record lows. We urge the bipartisan leadership of the House to release a joint statement well in advance of the convening of the next Congress in which you confirm your joint intent to reconstitute the Office and rename its Board next year.

The OCE has played an important role in helping protect the integrity of the House and its members. Not only has the Office established a record of fair investigations and bipartisan cooperation, it has provided a credible means for unfounded allegations of violations by Members and staff to be investigated and, if warranted, dismissed. The public record shows that 64 percent of complaints that the OCE has received have either been dismissed or closed before conclusion of the process. Further, OCE reports that, of the 49 reviews that have resulted in further referrals to the Committee on Ethics, 46 are a matter of public record and reflect a transparency not before seen in the ethics process.

The OCE's breadth of public investigations includes questions surrounding earmarks, travel allowances, permissible uses of legal expense funds, potential lobbying disclosure act violations, the combined efforts of which has generated significant improvement in legislative transparency.

At a time of historically low Congressional approval ratings, the OCE has continued to receive positive reviews from both the public and the press in publications as diverse as *The Washington Times* and *The New York Times*. While the Office would be best served

by further strengthening, we believe at this juncture it is most important that the bipartisan leadership of the House demonstrate your continued commitment to the OCE and publicly commit to its continued operation in the next Congress.

Sincerely,

Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Common Cause
Democracy 21
Judicial Watch
League of Women Voters
Thomas Mann
Norm Ornstein
Public Citizen
Project on Government Oversight (POGO)
The Sunlight Foundation
Taxpayers for Common Sense
James Thurber