

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

December 12, 2012

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

Dear Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi:

Our organizations are writing again to express our gratitude for creating and maintaining over the last four years the unique Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and to encourage both of your offices to ensure that OCE continues its operations in the 113th Congress without interruption by reactivating the agency and appointing new board members in a timely fashion.

The organizations include: Campaign Legal Center, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), Common Cause, Democracy 21, Judicial Watch, League of Women Voters, National Legal and Policy Center, Public Citizen, Sunlight Foundation and U.S. PIRG.

OCE is a semi-independent investigative agency that supplements the work of the House Ethics Committee. The agency was first established in 2009 by then-Speaker Pelosi and maintained intact by Speaker Boehner in the last congressional session. OCE provides a critical yet non-intrusive link between the public and the important work of the House Ethics Committee. OCE cannot make recommendations or judge any case, but in the course of its investigative reports, the agency does offer useful evidence and insights and helps the public better understand the nature of specific cases – both those that warrant dismissal and those that warrant further consideration. (See data on OCE and Ethics Committee enforcement actions at: <http://www.citizen.org/documents/making-the-congressional-ethics-process-work-oce-brief.pdf>)

Most of the preliminary investigations are dismissed for lack of merit or insufficient evidence. In the 112th Congress, only about a dozen cases have been recommended to the House Ethics Committee for further investigation.

The terms of four members of OCE's board will expire at the end of this year, leaving just the two chairmen – Porter Goss and David Skaggs – as sitting board members. OCE cannot function without an active board of directors.

It is the responsibility of solely your two offices to agree upon and appoint board members for the expired terms in the 113th Congress. The expiring terms are term-limited, so those four members cannot be reappointed, but the two current alternate members of the board may be appointed to regular terms. And any of the expiring board members may be appointed to the two alternate positions.

Whatever your choices for appointment to the board, there is a wide selection of qualified persons, especially among former members or staff of Congress familiar with how the institution operates, who are interested in serving on the board.

We urge you to proceed in a timely fashion to consider and appoint qualified and responsible members to OCE's board of directors so that the agency's useful work is not interrupted as we enter the 113th Congress.

Respectfully Submitted,

Campaign Legal Center
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
Common Cause
Democracy 21
Judicial Watch
League of Women Voters
National Legal and Policy Center
Public Citizen
Sunlight Foundation
U.S. PIRG