

Georgia Congressman says that "even a trip of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and in this case even a small step closer to good government is better than the status quo"

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Washington, DC - After casting his vote in favor of the *"Lobbying Accountability and Transparency Act,"* 12th District Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) today released the following statement outlining his support for the bill, and stressing the need for ever tougher requirements that he believes are still necessary:

"After months of nothing but talk, the House of Representatives has finally taken its first step toward cleaning up the mess in Washington. But this bill is only a very small step in the right direction - not the comprehensive ethics reform we need to pass if Congress ever hopes to regain the people's trust.

"If the folks in charge of Congress are serious about rooting out corruption, we're going to need to pass a bill that's a whole lot tougher than this. We need a high-powered pressure washer. But today, all we got was a dusty old broom.

"No one should be overly optimistic about what this bill will do. This should be our starting point for the next round of reforms, not an endgame. Even a trip of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and in this case even a small step closer to good government is better than the status quo."

Some of the common sense reform measures contained in the bill (H.R. 4975) include:

- Denying congressional retirement benefits to any U.S. House member convicted of a felony.

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- Requiring lobbyists to electronically file quarterly reports on their clients and the activities they conduct on behalf of those clients. Currently, they only file paper reports semi-annually.

- Demanding that any Member of Congress or senior staff disclose outside job negotiations, in order to help ensure that votes are not being traded for future jobs.

Congressman Barrow would like to expand the bill to include additional specific measures:

- The current bill requires that the Clerk of the House brief each retiring Member of the House on the restrictions they must obey before becoming a lobbyist. However, the bill does not make any changes to the one-year lobbying ban imposed on former Members lobbying Congress.

Congressman Barrow believes the current one-year ban should be extended to at least two years.

He also supports closing the loophole that allows former Members of Congress to "lobby" the White House and other federal agencies while waiting their turn to lobby their former colleagues.

- The current bill mandates that appropriations bills be required to include a list of earmarks in the legislation, as well as the name of the Members of Congress who requested each earmark. Congressman Barrow believes that Members of Congress sponsoring any earmarks should be required to publicly disclose any financial interest they have in their earmarks. Barrow also believes that the final version of any bill containing earmarks should be made public at least three days before Congress votes on the bill, in order to ensure greater scrutiny and accountability.

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