

# Center for American Progress



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## **AMENDING THE RULES OF THE HOUSE TO PROTECT THE INTEGRITY OF THE INSTITUTION**

### **LIMITING INFLUENCE BY LOBBYISTS**

1. No member or staff of the House of Representatives may accept travel or lodging or reimbursement for such expenses if he or she has not obtained from the sponsor, and filed with the Clerk of the House, the following declarations:
  - a. that no lobbyists have been invited to travel, lodge or attend meetings with the Member or staff,
  - b. that the sponsor does not conduct lobbying activities as defined in section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code,
  - c. that the sponsor neither employs a registered lobbyist nor contracts for such services nor is it affiliated with such an entity, and
  - d. that the trip was not financed by a corporation unless through contributions deductible under the Internal Revenue Code and the source of all such contributions are disclosed in the declaration.
2. Any former Member of the House who wishes to exercise the right to be present on the Floor of the House when the House is in session must sign a declaration stating that the House is not debating or voting on an issue on which the former member has a financial interest and that the former member will not advocate in any way in behalf of or in opposition to any matter before the House while present on the floor.

### **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

3. A reconciliation measure shall not be in order if it would increase the size of the budget deficit compared to the CBO baseline for the coming or subsequent fiscal years. This rule may be waived only with the consent of the majority and minority leaders and if the House agrees to consider the rule by a 2/3 vote of the House.
4. Close the loophole in current rules under which Budget Act points of order do not apply to unreported legislation. Under present rules, amendments to an

unreported measure are subject to Budget Act restrictions but the underlying bill is not.

### **CURBING ABUSES OF POWER**

5. No recorded vote in the House of Representatives or the committee of the Whole House can last longer than 20 minutes without the consent of either both Floor managers or of both Leaders.
6. Amend the House Ethics Code to make it an offense for a Member to condition funding for earmarks request by another Member based on how the requesting Member votes on legislation.
7. Amend the House Ethics Code to make it an offense for any Member to advocate an earmark unless that Member discloses whether he or she either has a financial interest in the entity or exercises any control over it, such as appointing members of the organization's board.
8. If a rule makes in order text that is different from what the committee of jurisdiction has reported, the rule must provide the chairman or ranking minority member, if requested, a preferential amendment – neither divisible nor amendable unless adopted and all necessary points of order waived - to restore the bill (in whole or in part) to its original form.
9. A rule may waive points of order against a measure but only if the rule also waives the same points of order for an amendment if requested by the minority leader or designee.

### **ENDING 2-DAY WORK WEEKS**

10. Before the House can adjourn at the end of a session, the House must have conducted 20 or more weeks with at least one recorded vote or quorum call on at least four of the five calendar work days.

### **KNOWING WHAT THE HOUSE IS VOTING ON**

11. Except for measures on the suspension calendar, the House cannot consider legislation unless printed copies of such legislation have been available to all members of the House for a period of 24 hours. This rule cannot be waived by majority vote but can be waived by unanimous consent of the House.

### **FULL AND OPEN DEBATE IN CONFERENCE**

12. It shall not be in order for the House to agree to go to conference on a general appropriation bill unless the Senate expresses its differences with the House in the form of numbered amendments.

13. It shall not be in order to consider a conference report unless there has been a formal open meeting of the conference at which all provisions on which the two bodies disagree are open to discussion and the resolution of the differences between the two bodies is approved by a recorded vote of a majority of House appointed conferees. The requirement that the discussion and votes stipulated in this rule must be held in open session may be waived for purposes of national security, but such votes and discussions are required in the executive session of the conference. This rule cannot be waived by majority vote but can be waived by unanimous consent.
  
14. It shall not be in order to consider any conference report that is materially different from what was agreed to by a majority of House conferees in an open session of the conference and was not part of the final package on which a favorable vote was cast by a majority of House Conferees. This rule cannot be waived by majority vote but can be waived by unanimous consent.