



**Brennan Center for Justice • Campaign Legal Center
Common Cause • Democracy 21
League of Women Voters • Public Citizen • U.S. PIRG**

November 6, 2008

Statement of Reform Groups Announcing Government Integrity Reform Agenda for the 111th Congress

The following statement was issued by the Brennan Center for Justice, the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG. The statement is followed by the groups' government integrity reform agenda for the 111th Congress:

Our organizations worked hard to pass the landmark ethics and lobbying reforms that were enacted in the 110th Congress. At the time, we said that our next major battle would be to reform the way federal campaigns are financed.

A central theme of the 2008 presidential race was the need to fix Washington. President-elect Obama, for example, said during the campaign, "to fix health care we have to fix Washington."

In order to fix Washington, the fundamental problems caused by the undue influence of contributions over government decisions must be effectively addressed. While other issues on our reform agenda are important, the way Washington works is not going to change until we fundamentally change the nation's campaign finance laws.

In order to accomplish this goal, the overriding priority on our reform agenda for the 111th Congress is to repair the presidential public financing system and to create a new public financing system for congressional races.

The key role that influence-money played in creating the national financial crisis provides just one more example of the enormous costs to citizens and taxpayers that come from federal candidates being dependent on special interest groups, lobbyists, bundlers and large contributions for their campaign funds.

It is widely acknowledged that the absence of effective regulation and oversight played a major role in the massive financial crisis that has occurred. Campaign



contributions to federal officeholders from the financial sector played a major role in thwarting such effective regulation and oversight.

It is no coincidence that during the past decade, the financial sector contributed \$1.5 billion to federal candidates and their parties, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, with 56 percent of the funds going to Republicans and 44 of the funds going to Democrats - a bipartisan approach to influence-seeking.

Our organizations call on President-elect Obama and members of Congress to take action to fundamentally reform the nation's campaign finance laws.



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Government Integrity Reform Agenda for 111th Congress

Overriding Priority for Fixing Washington

**Repair the public financing system for presidential elections and
create a new public financing system for congressional elections.**

Other Campaign Finance Issues

- Close major campaign finance loopholes: ban joint fundraising committees used by presidential candidates to circumvent candidate contribution limits; prevent presidential candidates from using candidate/party "hybrid ads" to avoid counting full costs of ads against public financing spending limits; curb Leadership PACs;
- Reform and strengthen the Federal Election Commission; press for Commissioners to be appointed by the President based on qualifications and experience;
- Ensure that independent groups making expenditures for TV ads and other public communications to influence federal elections comply with federal campaign finance laws;
- Strengthen existing bundling disclosure rules to require federal candidates to disclose the total amount raised by each bundler (not just by each registered lobbyist) who raises more than a threshold amount for their campaigns.

Ethics and Lobbying Issues

- Ensure that the new congressional ethics rules and lobbying disclosure law enacted in the 110th Congress are properly interpreted and effectively enforced;
- Ensure that the new Office of Congressional Ethics is properly implemented;
- Reform the Executive Branch Office of Government Ethics; strengthen Executive Branch ethics rules;
- Support "Public Corruption Prosecution Improvements Act" to close loopholes in the public corruption laws and strengthen their enforcement.