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Joan Claybrook, President

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## **FOUR REFORM GROUPS EXPRESS DISAPPOINTMENT IN PROPOSED NEW HOUSE OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS AND THE ABSENCE OF ANY INVESTIGATORY POWERS TO CARRY OUT ITS RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Statement of Reform Groups**

Our organizations are very disappointed that the Office of Congressional Ethics (Office) proposed today by the Democratic Members of the House Ethics Task Force fails to provide the Office with either subpoena power or access to subpoena power through the House Ethics Committee. This basic flaw should be corrected.

The organizations include the Campaign Legal Center, Democracy 21, the League of Women Voters and Public Citizen.

Our groups have called for the establishment of a new independent, professional entity in Congress to assist the House Ethics Committee in enforcing the House ethics rules.

We believe such an entity is necessary to effectively respond to the complete breakdown of the House ethics enforcement process in the last Congress and to help ensure that the new House ethics rules are properly enforced.

Under the proposal for a new Office, which we have not yet had the opportunity to fully review, the Office is given the authority to make findings of fact regarding potential ethics matters and to recommend to the House Ethics Committee whether the matters should be investigated by the Committee.

The Office, however, is not given the powers that are needed to conduct effective fact-finding investigations. The Office is denied any form of subpoena power, the tool that is provided to every congressional Committee that conducts investigations.

Without subpoena power or access to subpoena power, the Office can be ignored in its efforts to interview individuals and obtain documents that may be central to the ethics matter at hand. The findings of fact by the Office, furthermore, are often likely to be limited to information that is already publicly available.

We recognize and appreciate the fact that the proposed new Office would provide, for the first time, a role for individuals outside of Congress in the process for enforcing the congressional ethics rules.

Without investigatory powers to carry out its responsibilities, however, we are seriously concerned about the ability of the Office to effectively do its job.

We believe that it is not too late to address the problems caused by the failure to give the Office investigatory powers. We urge House Speaker Pelosi and the House Rules Committee to take the appropriate steps necessary to fix this basic problem by making in order and supporting an amendment to provide the new Office with subpoena power or access to subpoena power to carry out its responsibilities. We urge House members to support such an amendment.

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