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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Members of Congress Increasingly Use Revolving Door to Launch Lucrative Lobbying Careers**

#### ***43 Percent of Lawmakers Who Left Office Since 1998 Have Become Lobbyists, Public Citizen Analysis Shows***

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Forty-three percent of members of Congress who left office since 1998 and were eligible to lobby have become lobbyists, indicating that Congress has increasingly become a way station on the path to the lucrative influence-peddling industry, according to a new Public Citizen report released today.

The report, *Congressional Revolving Doors: The Journey from Congress to K Street*, examines in depth the case of one former member who has done particularly well after going through the revolving door. Just days after he left Congress in 1999 amid allegations of an extramarital affair, former U.S. Rep. Bob Livingston (R-La.) opened a lobbying shop. In the first year he pulled in \$1.1 million, even though he was restricted from personally lobbying his former colleagues for a year. (Former members often skirt the lobby prohibition rules by supervising other lobbyists for the first year after leaving Congress.) The next year, after the cooling-off period was lifted, his firm's lobbying revenues more than quadrupled to \$4.8 million.

The report, based on hundreds of lobbyist registration documents as well as industry and news media reports, is available at <http://www.LobbyingInfo.org>, a new Public Citizen Web site launched today and designed to track the influence of special interests in Washington. The Web site contains a searchable database of former federal officials and staff who have passed through the revolving door, Public Citizen investigative reports on lobbying battles waged by industry, detailed summaries of influence-peddling laws and recommendations for reforming the system.

“People used to run for Congress to serve the greater good and help the public,” said Public Citizen President Joan Claybrook. “Now Congress has become a way station to wealth. Members use it for job training and networking so they can leave office and cash in on the connections they forged as elected officials. No wonder the public is cynical about whose interests lawmakers are protecting in Washington. Lobbying has become the top career choice for departing members of Congress.”

According to the report:

- Forty-three percent of the 198 members who have left Congress since 1998 and were eligible to lobby have become registered lobbyists.
- Fifty percent of eligible departing members of the U.S. Senate have become lobbyists (18 of 36) while 42 percent of eligible departing members of the U.S. House of Representatives have become lobbyists (68 of 162).
- Almost 52 percent of the Republican members of Congress who left Capitol Hill since 1998 registered to lobby (58 of 112) compared to 33 percent of the departing Democrats (28 of 86). This could reflect the fact that after George W. Bush became president, Washington became a hostile place for lobbyists whose contacts were Democratic. As part of the “K Street Project” pushed by Republicans, including House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas), lobbying firms that hired former Democratic members of Congress were to be denied access and business by the Republican majority.
- Of the 2000 departing class, the ratio was even more lopsided when Republicans won the White House and retained control of Congress. More than 62 percent of Republicans (23 of 37) who left that year became lobbyists, compared to only 15 percent of Democrats (2 of 13).

Livingston exemplifies how a member-turned-lobbyist interacts with his former colleagues. In six years, Livingston built his business into the 12<sup>th</sup> largest non-law lobbying firm in Washington and took in almost \$40 million from 1999 through 2004, records show. Among his clients are Turkey, Morocco and the Cayman Islands, which collectively paid his firm \$11 million from 2000 to 2004, with \$9 million of that coming from Turkey.

Livingston delivered; he helped ensure that a \$1 billion supplemental appropriation for Turkey remained intact through the legislative process, despite that country’s refusal to allow U.S. troops to use its soil as a staging area for the Iraq invasion. He also helped kill an amendment that would have formally recognized the Armenian genocide that occurred between 1915 and 1923. Turkey has always opposed this recognition.

Livingston, his wife Bonnie and his two political action committees (PACs) also contributed \$503,449 to various candidates or their PACs from 2000 through 2004. Some of that money went to people Livingston later lobbied.

“The revolving door is spinning faster than ever,” said Frank Clemente, director of Public Citizen’s Congress Watch division. “When nearly half the lawmakers in Congress use their position to move into a job that pays so handsomely, it’s time to change the system.”

In light of the findings, Public Citizen recommends the following reforms:

- Extend the former members’ cooling-off period (the time during which they are not allowed to lobby) to two years and include the supervision of lobbyists as a prohibited activity.
- Require members of Congress to disclose their employment negotiations while they are in office if they pose a conflict of interest, similar to the requirement for the executive branch.
- Repeal the privileges that give former members of Congress special access to former colleagues (access to the House and Senate floor and to members-only gymnasiums and restaurants) if they register to lobby.
- Prohibit registered lobbyists from making, soliciting or arranging campaign contributions to elected officials in the branches of government they lobby (Congress, the executive branch or both).

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Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. For more information, please visit [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org).