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Summary of H.R. 2412 Special Interest Lobbying and Ethics Accountability Act of 2005

Rep. Marty Meehan (D-Mass.)

Status: Referred to the Committee on the Judiciary, and in addition to the Committees on Standards of Official Conduct, and Rules, depending on jurisdiction determined by the Speaker.

1. Increases Lobbying Disclosure:

- Requires lobbyists to disclose their activities quarterly.
- Mandates electronic filing of lobbying reports.
- Establishes a searchable, sortable and downloadable Internet database of reports.
- Exposes the identities of “stealth” lobbying coalitions, if the members are primarily established to lobby on the specific issue.
- Adds “grassroots” activities of “mass communications” directed at the general public to encourage lobbying contacts under the definition of reportable lobbying activities.
- Requires lobbyists to disclose all lobbying contacts with members of Congress and covered executive officials.

2. Slows the Revolving Door:

- Extends the current one-year “cooling-off period” to two years for members, senior staff, and senior executive personnel, which prohibits them from making lobbying contacts with the entity in which they served.
- Requires public disclosure by members (but not senior staff) and executive branch officials when negotiating future employment.
- Prohibits members from basing official actions on the prospect of personal gain or employment.
- Prohibits members and staff from influencing who lobbying firms will hire based on partisanship.
- Requires lobbyists to disclose on their lobbying registrations any previous employment with the executive or legislative branch, rather than only such employment within two years prior to acting as a lobbyist.

3. Curbs Excesses in Congressional Travel:

- Prohibits registered lobbyists from organizing or soliciting funds for congressional travel.
- Prohibits “front groups” from hiding sponsors of travel.
- Requires members to disclose detailed itineraries of trips.
- Establishes reasonable ceilings on the daily cost of privately-sponsored congressional travel.

4. Toughens Enforcement and Oversight:

- Imposes substantial fines (up to \$100,000 for the first offense, \$300,000 for the second offense, \$500,000 for the third offense) for violations of the travel rules.
- Doubles the civil penalty (up to \$100,000) for failing to file lobbying reports.
- Requires the Government Accountability Office to investigate and report on the effectiveness of the House and Senate offices responsible for oversight of lobbying and travel rules.
- Mandates that the House Administration Committee hold hearings on lobbying disclosure.
- Forms a bipartisan task force to review congressional ethics oversight and enforcement.

10/06/05