



August 21, 2018

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

It is my pleasure to write you this letter to express the Project On Government Oversight's (POGO) support for your recently introduced Anti-Corruption and Public Integrity Act.

POGO is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that investigates and exposes waste, corruption, abuse of power, and when the government fails to serve the public or silences those who report wrongdoing. We champion reforms to achieve a more effective, ethical, and accountable federal government that safeguards constitutional principles.

I believe many of the provisions in your bill will promote a more ethical government and help restore the public's faith in the integrity of federal spending, missions, and programs. Expanding ethics laws to cover all government employees and closing loopholes in revolving door laws will ensure those coming into or leaving the government are working for the public and not their former or future employers or clients. Redefining the term "lobbyist," something considered by then-candidate Trump on the campaign trail, will help end influence-peddling activities in governmental and Congressional circles. Requiring all Inspectors General to publish redacted versions of reports containing classified information, or the titles of reports in instances where the full report is classified, will increase the Congress's and public's ability to hold agencies accountable. And limiting the informal review of proposed regulatory actions by nongovernment actors may curtail undue and secret industry influence in the regulatory process.

I am also excited to see that the bill includes provisions to improve Congress's ability to do its job. The reinstatement of the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment, and reforms to strengthen Congressional staffing will provide more skilled and independent expertise to Members of Congress, resources that are sorely needed. Furthermore, this bill clarifies that agencies may not use Freedom of Information Act exemptions to keep information from Members of Congress, allowing for more robust oversight of legislative efforts. Perhaps most importantly, the bill includes strong enforcement mechanisms to ensure that the reforms of the bill have the necessary teeth to be effective.

This legislative package is a considerable undertaking, and while we are supportive of many of the proposals included within, we have concerns about a few of the provisions—particularly the blanket prohibition of foreign lobbying. Although the Justice Department's enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) is far from perfect, it does provide transparency into how foreign governments and political parties are attempting to influence U.S. policies. Banning foreign lobbying entirely may only serve to further obscure the world of foreign influence by

pushing those who would promote foreign interests to completely hide their work. We've seen this happen far too often with domestic lobbying bans. FARA requires transparency and disclosure of foreign influence activities so the public can know exactly which countries are promoting which policies and how.

We also have concerns related to moving the supervision of all Inspectors General to the Director of the newly created Office of Public Integrity. POGO has examined IG independence and effectiveness issues and has recommended reforms to improve the offices over the last decade, but we don't believe centralizing authority over all IGs in one political appointee is a good way to address the issues faced by the offices.

Overall, we believe that your Anti-Corruption and Public Integrity Act largely lives up to its name and are happy to support many of the proposals you've included. We believe many of the proposals deserve bipartisan support and look forward to continued work with your office on this bill.

Sincerely,



Danielle Brian
Executive Director