

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 2, 2006

The Honorable John McCain  
United States Senate  
241 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear John:

Thank you for inviting me to participate in the meeting yesterday to discuss lobbying and ethics reform proposals currently before the Senate. I appreciate your willingness to reach out to me and several other Senate Democrats to discuss what should be done to restore public confidence in the way that Congress conducts its business. The discussion clearly underscored the difficult challenge facing Congress.

You and many in the Democratic Caucus have played a major role in reform efforts in the Senate. In fact, the Indian Affairs Committee hearings you led were instrumental in promoting public awareness of the culture of corruption that has permeated the nation's capital.

As you know, Senator Harry Reid and others in the Democratic Caucus have taken an important step by introducing S. 2180, the Honest Leadership Act, which imposes many of the same disclosure requirements for lobbyists that you have proposed, while also strengthening enforcement, eliminating "pay to play" schemes, and imposing more restrictive rules on meals, gifts, and travel that Members and their staff can receive from special interests that advocate before Congress. This bill, which now has the support of 40 members of the Democratic Caucus, represents a significant step in addressing many of the worst aspects of corruption that have come to light as a result of the Justice Department investigation of Jack Abramoff.

I know you have expressed an interest in creating a task force to further study and discuss these matters, but I and others in the Democratic Caucus believe the more effective and timely course is to allow the committees of jurisdiction to roll up their sleeves and get to work on writing ethics and lobbying reform legislation that a majority of the Senate can support. Committee consideration of these matters through the normal course will ensure that these issues are discussed in a public forum and that those within Congress, as well as those on the outside, can express their views, ensuring a thorough review of this matter.

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Given the state of affairs in Washington, we have a historic opportunity to make fundamental changes in the way our government operates so that the actions we take as public officials are responsive and transparent to the American people. Thank you again for your interest in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barack', with a large, stylized initial 'B' and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Barack Obama  
United States Senator