

## House Members Urge President to Sign Executive Order on Transparency

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Friday, July 29, 2011

### Transparency Executive Order Would Reduce Corruption

More than 60 members of Congress yesterday [urged](#) President Obama to sign an **executive order to require federal contractors to make their campaign spending public**. “We believe that with public funds come public responsibilities, and anyone benefiting from taxpayer money has the responsibility to be fully transparent,” reads the letter. Meanwhile, the **U.S. Chamber of Commerce** [told House members](#) that voting to make federal contractors “more transparent about their political spending will negatively impact their legislative scorecard.”

Since the proposed order leaked in April, opponents have repeatedly claimed that it will bring politics into the bidding process — more corruption in an already corrupt political system.

More transparency is necessary to protect the integrity of the federal contracting process, and [to make sure that we don't have a pay-to-play system](#) in which taxpayer dollars are doled out in exchange for political payments. As it is, the politicians know who is donating and benefiting from political spending — and who to reward with lucrative contracts. The only people who don't know are the American people. With disclosure, they'll be able to keep an eye on contracting, and prevent corruption.

Justice Louis Brandeis once said that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and nowhere is that more true than in political spending. By signing this executive order, President Obama can help voters see the true identity of those advancing political agendas under the cover of darkness.

Given the stakes, swift action is imperative. Hundreds of billions of dollars are handed out in federal contracts every year, many of them with little to no meaningful competition—belying the argument that competitive bidding provides sufficient protection against pay-to-play corruption. A [2007 report](#) from Representative Henry Waxman, *More Dollars, Less Sense*, reported that more than half of annual federal procurement spending—over \$200 billion in new contracts—was awarded without full and open competition, and about half of that amount, \$103 billion, was spent on no-bid contracts, which have no competition at all. In 2006, of contracts that were putatively awarded through “full and open competition,” a full \$47.7 billion worth of contracts were awarded after the government received only a single bid. The Waxman report also found evidence of significant waste, fraud, abuse or mismanagement in contracts with a cumulative total of \$1.1 trillion.

Federal agencies spent about \$535 billion in fiscal 2010 on government contracts. According to the Sunlight Foundation's Paul Blumenthal, [33 of the 41 companies](#) listed in the top one hundred campaign contributors in the past two decades are recipients of federal contracts. With this many dollars at stake, it is crucial to take every step to ensure that any opportunities for fraud, waste, or corruption are foreclosed.

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