

Washington, D.C. - U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) applauded last night's vote establishing an independent Office of Congressional Ethics, which will ensure that Members of Congress are held accountable for misconduct. Price served on the Ethics Task Force that formulated the landmark proposal.

The new office will include six independent panelists who are jointly appointed by the Speaker of the House and the Minority Leader. Professional staff members will help the appointees investigate allegations of misconduct and will refer appropriate matters to the House Ethics Committee along with recommendations on whether further action is warranted.

"The malfeasance of a handful of representatives has shaken the public's faith in its representative government," Price said. "We took a major step toward restoring that faith last year when we passed stricter rules on lobbying, private travel, earmarks, and pay-as-you-go budgeting. With the establishment of this independent ethics office, we hope to beef up enforcement of the House's rules so that there should be no confusion: if you break the rules, you will be held accountable."

Previously, the House Ethics Committee retained sole responsibility for investigating unethical behavior, which some had criticized as an ineffective system of accountability because it relied upon Members of Congress to investigate their colleagues. The Ethics Committee has also been subject to partisan gridlock, which has prevented timely consideration of complaints.

In order to prevent politically-motivated "witch hunts", investigations by the new panel can only be initiated if supported by a Democratic and Republican appointee. Current members of Congress and lobbyists are also ineligible to serve on the panel.

The Ethics Task Force, on which Price served, was appointed last year and undertook extensive bipartisan deliberations to arrive at the proposal, including a series of meetings and public hearings. After receiving input from other House Members, amendments were made to strengthen the proposal and address concerns.

"Our Task Force took a long, serious look at the current ethics enforcement process, and under

the leadership of my friend Rep. Mike Capuano (D-MA), we determined that reform was the right way to restore public confidence," Price added. "I'm proud that the majority of the House agreed."

Nationally respected, independent, non-partisan organizations including Common Cause, Democracy 21, and [U.S. PIRG urged passage](#) of the House initiative. Since the measure ([H. Res. 895](#)) alters the House's own rules, it does not require Senate or Presidential action and is now enacted. The vote, which occurred late last night, was 229 to 182.

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