

Washington DC - Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) issued the following statement today, opposing H.R. 4975, the so-called "Lobbying Accountability Act," backed by Republican leaders in the House of Representatives. Although its sponsors have labeled the bill a major reform effort, most organizations concerned with ethics and lobbying reform oppose H.R. 4975, calling it far too weak to be effective.

"The legislation before us today is a missed opportunity to fix an area in great need of reform," stated Blumenauer. "This bill does little to rein in the activities of lobbyists and members. The restrictive rule for its consideration expressly prohibited many viable alternatives from being considered.

"The Ethics Committee and the Rules Committee can take a number of actions to improve our broken ethics system. But what we should and must do is have an independent process. My colleague from Oregon, Greg Walden, and I crafted an amendment to establish an independent commission, composed of former Members of Congress, who would be able to govern Congress in a fair and transparent manner. The amendment also provided meaningful reporting and review requirements for both Members and lobbyists, creating a far greater system of accountability and oversight than our current system. Unfortunately, the Rules Committee did not make this amendment in order.

"Our constituents will no longer stand for secretive legislative activity that hides bill sponsorship and tolerates missing fingerprints. We must be given enough time to understand and digest proposals. The only reason why we shouldn't have a minimum of three days to examine legislative proposals is if there is a real emergency, as determined by a vote of the House.

"If we are to restore voters' faith in both their representatives and our representative system, we must do more. It is not enough to simply catch and punish those who broke the law; we must do more if we are to rekindle the public's trust in our work and our integrity."