

Statement on Signing the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007

September 14, 2007

Today I signed into law S. 1, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007. This bill represents some progress towards ethics, lobbying, and earmark reform, all of which I strongly support. Strengthening the ethical standards that govern lobbying activities and beginning to address meaningful earmark reform are necessary steps to provide the public with a more transparent lawmaking process. The essence of successful ethics reform is not laws and restrictions, but full disclosure. The legislation includes minimal improvements in the area of disclosure, both for lobbying and earmarks. But there is still more to be done, and I will work with the Congress to improve upon this legislation.

For example, the bill holds Members of the Senate and executive branch employees to a much higher standard of conduct than Members of the House. The specific bill language is confusing, and I believe these increased restrictions would have a negative impact on recruitment and retention of Federal employees. I urge the Congress to make these standards more uniform and less confusing and to do so in a way that will not discourage public service.

In addition, this bill would have the effect of unreasonably burdening sitting Presidents' and Vice Presidents' reelection campaigns. I look forward to working with Congress to amend these provisions to provide a reasonable process for allocating the cost of Presidential and Vice Presidential campaign travel that is consistent with security needs.

I am pleased that the Congress has begun to make progress in bringing greater transparency to the earmarking process. However, this bill falls far short of the reform that American taxpayers deserve. I am concerned that there are potential loopholes in some of the earmark reforms included in this bill that would allow earmarks to escape sufficient scrutiny. This legislation also does not address other earmark reforms I have called on Congress to implement, such as ending the practice of putting earmarks in report language.

I thank members of both parties who worked on this legislation and look forward to working with the Congress to further advance ethics, lobbying, and earmark reform.

NOTE: S. 1, approved September 14, was assigned Public Law 110–81.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Benchmark Assessment Report September 14, 2007

To the Congress of the United States:

Consistent with section 1314 of the U.S. Troop Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act, 2007 (Public Law 110–28) (the "Act"), attached is a report that assesses the status of each of the 18 Iraqi

benchmarks contained in the Act and declares whether satisfactory progress toward meeting these benchmarks is, or is not, being achieved.

The second of two reports submitted consistent with the Act, it has been prepared in consultation with the Secretaries