Open Letter in Support of Stronger Ethics for a More Effective Pentagon to

House Committee on Rules

We the undersigned organizations urge you to support five amendments to the <u>National Defense Authorization</u> <u>Act for Fiscal Year 2020</u> (NDAA FY20; H.R. 2500) to strengthen ethics laws and shine a light on potentially dangerous conflicts of interest at the Pentagon.

The American people should have confidence that national security officials are making decisions based on what's best for the national defense of the country. Unfortunately, our current system allows private interests to be put ahead of protecting national interests. Most voters support reforms like these and have a right to know who is seeking to influence the Pentagon—whether they're foreign governments or big defense contractors. That's why Congress should take concrete steps now to clean up Washington by passing these commonsense ethics reforms for the Pentagon.

- Amendment #208 Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) Retired military officers who work for foreign governments are already required to receive permission from their military service and the State Department. This amendment would require annual public reporting to see which retired military officers are on foreign payrolls.
- Amendment #226 Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) Government Accountability Office found 52 contractors
 employed 2,435 former Department of Defense (DoD) senior and acquisition officials who had "previously
 served as generals, admirals, senior executives, program managers, contracting officers, or in other acquisition
 positions which made them subject to restrictions on their post-DOD employment." This amendment would
 increase disclosure by defense contractors about the contacts between their employees who are former senior
 DoD officials and the Pentagon.
- Amendment #394 Rep. Jackie Speier (D-CA), Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) In the NDAA FY08, Senator John McCain led an effort to require DoD to maintain a database of defense officials who leave to work for defense contractors. This amendment would make the Pentagon's existing revolving door database available to the public online and extend the post-employment information in the database from two to four years.
- Amendment #555 Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN) Under existing law, senior Air Force acquisition officials can award contracts to defense contractors like Boeing and then join the company afterwards as long as they aren't going to the specific division at the company that received the contract. This amendment would close the loopholes in the existing one or two-year cooling off periods to prevent government officials from going to work for any division or department of a giant contractor they contracted with on behalf of the Pentagon, and likewise would prevent former contractor employees from overseeing their former employer after becoming a federal official. It also requires contractors to certify ethics compliance of former DoD senior officials and flag officers in their employ.
- Amendment #556 Rep. Dean Phillips (D-MN), Rep. Speier (D-CA) President Trump's ethics executive order requires his appointees to agree to a lifetime foreign lobbying ban. This amendment would require DoD, State Department and Treasury senior officials to seek permission before they go to work for foreign governments and political parties.

We support reforms like these because a government by the people needs to work for the people—and for our national security. These reforms are practical, not political. We urge both Democrats and Republicans to set aside partisan politics and stand up for a more ethical and effective national defense now.

¹ Politico/Morning Consult found 77% of registered voters named "Passing an anti-corruption bill that would rein in the influence of money and lobbying in Washington" as a top or important concern (See page 131 here).

² Government Accountability Office, *Defense Contracting: Post-Government Employment of Former DOD Officials Needs Greater Transparency*, May 21, 2008, Executive Summary. https://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08485.pdf

Sincerely,

Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AKPIRG)

Center for International Policy

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington

Common Cause

CREDO

Demand Progress

Essential Information

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Global Witness

Government Accountability Project

Government Information Watch

Liberty Coalition

London Center for Public Policy

National Priorities Project at the Institute for Policy Studies

New Mexicans for Money Out of Politics

Open Society Policy Center

Open the Government

Peace Action

Physicians for Social Responsibility

Project On Government Oversight (POGO)

Public Citizen

Senior Executives Association (SEA)

Taxpayers for Common Sense

Taxpayers Protection Alliance

Win Without War

Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)