



*Jan 3, 2017*

Dear Speaker Ryan:

**The House of Representatives is poised to vote on the rules package (H.Res. 5) for the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress.**

During a closed door session of the House Republican Conference an amendment was adopted that would effectively gut the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE). We strongly oppose this amendment that will undermine and eliminate the independence of the Office of Congressional Ethics and eviscerate an important institution in the House that has successfully enforced the House ethics rules and has served to deter ethics violations by House members. The failure of the existing Ethics Committee process was why the OCE was formed in the first place. We urge that this provision be stricken from the package when it is considered later today.

At Taxpayers for Common Sense, we have long supported the Office of Congressional Ethics, as well as the importance of independent, investigatory bodies like inspectors generals at the agency level. Independent watchdogs like the Office of Congressional Ethics are critical to preventing and responding to corruption or other efforts to waste taxpayer dollars. Do not believe any rhetoric that this proposal was a mere tweak to address certain due process concerns. This is an effort to remove any effective oversight and accountability that taxpayers sorely need, especially in this time of cynicism about our democracy. For instance, this amendment expressly prohibits the Office of Congressional Ethics from reporting apparent criminal violations to law enforcement.

We urge you to open up the House rules today to allow a separate vote on removing the stealth attack on oversight from the rules. Otherwise, one of the first acts of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress will be to destroy the Office of Ethics and of ethics enforcement in the House.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. Ryan Alexander".

Ryan Alexander

President