

December 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
235 Cannon House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

We write to express our strong support for the For the People Act (H.R.1/S.949), a comprehensive pro-democracy bill that would help restore faith in the U.S. political system and demonstrate strong U.S. leadership on an issue with global resonance.

Transparency International's U.S. office (TI-US) is part of a global coalition dedicated to fighting corruption. With over 110 independent chapters around the world, Transparency International (TI) partners with businesses, government, and citizens to promote transparency and accountability, and to curb the abuse of power, in both the public and private sectors.

In January 2020, the United States received a record-low score on TI's annual "Corruption Perceptions Index" (CPI), the most widely used indicator of corruption across the world. Disturbingly, one expert analysis that informed the U.S.'s score found that people in the U.S., more than the people of any other major developed country in the world, believe that rich people buy elections. In this respect, the U.S. performed worse than countries such as Venezuela, Mozambique, and Myanmar.

The U.S.'s political integrity laws, including our laws governing campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics, are at the heart of this problem. They have not kept pace with changes in our politics and political culture, and they now leave us vulnerable to one of the most serious threats our country faces—foreign corruptive influence, or the corrosive attempts by kleptocrats, dictators, and other corrupt regimes to undermine our government.

When a Kremlin-backed hacking of U.S. election infrastructure and campaign of misinformation seeks to sway the outcome of a U.S. presidential election, we see the danger of foreign corruptive influence. When foreign adversaries influence U.S. policy by secretly funding well-connected Washington lobbyists to advance foreign interests, we see the danger of foreign corruptive influence. When foreign interests spend money to influence U.S. elections, whether through secret political contributions or by using dark money that exploits the corporate form, we see foreign corruptive influence undermining American self-government. **Without concrete steps to address foreign corruptive influence, America's adversaries will continue to subvert our political process, skew traditional and social media content to their interests, and sow divisiveness and discord.**

Thankfully, the For the People Act contains many of the most important safeguards we need to protect our political institutions against foreign corruptive influence. H.R.1 would strengthen and meaningfully enforce the Foreign Agents Registration Act, which requires U.S. citizens to disclose lobbying done on behalf of foreign governments; it would require “dark money” nonprofits to publicly disclose their foreign funders; it would ensure that digital political ads are subject to the same transparency as other political spending; and it would prevent corporations with significant foreign ownership or control from influencing U.S. elections.

As evidenced recently by the broad coalition that worked to end the abuse of anonymous shell companies by corrupt actors—a coalition that included law enforcement, financial institutions, faith groups, business trade associations, civil rights organizations, environmental groups, and congressional leaders across the political spectrum—the fight against foreign corruption has America behind it.

We strongly support the For The People Act as a prerequisite to rebuilding the integrity of our political system. We appreciate your consideration of our views. If our office can assist in any way, please don’t hesitate to contact us at sgreytak@transparency.org or 614-668-0258.

Sincerely,

Gary Kalman
Director

Scott Greytak
Advocacy Director