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U.S. HITS NEW LOW IN GLOBAL CORRUPTION INDEX

The United States has received its lowest score in eight years on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) released today by Transparency International, dropping two points to score 69 out of 100. The Index draws from over a dozen independent expert assessments and surveys to measure perceptions of public sector corruption in 180 countries and territories. Scores on the CPI range from zero (very corrupt) to 100 (not corrupt).

Gary Kalman, Director of the new U.S. office of Transparency International, said the following:

“Weaknesses in our laws are being exploited by a growing list of bad actors at home and abroad. From foreign despots to terror networks, drug cartels to human traffickers, some of the world’s most destructive forces are benefitting from gaps in U.S. law. Multiple corruption scandals in the last year alone have shown that transnational corruption is often facilitated, enabled, or perpetuated by countries toward the top of the Index, including the United States. Fortunately, bipartisan legislation currently before Congress, the ILLICIT CASH Act and the Corporate Transparency Act, would go a long way toward stopping these interests from using the U.S. as a laundromat for their dirty cash.”

CPI global highlights

Denmark and New Zealand top the Index with 87 points each, while Syria, South Sudan, and Somalia are at the bottom, with 13, 12, and 9 points, respectively. Decreases in score for several of the most advanced economies in the world including Canada (-4), France (-3) and the UK (-3) show that they, along with the United States, must not be complacent in the fight against corruption.

Across the world, more than two-thirds of countries and territories score below 50, with an average score of 43. Since 2012, only 22 countries have significantly improved their scores, while 21 have declined significantly.

“Frustration with government corruption and lack of trust in institutions speaks to a need for greater political integrity,” said Delia Ferreira Rubio, Chair of Transparency International. “Governments around the world must urgently address the corrupting role of special interest money in campaign financing and the undue influence it exerts on our political systems.”

Perception of political corruption on the rise

Countries that score lower on the Index typically have weak or poorly enforced campaign finance laws, according to Transparency International’s analysis. At the same time, over half of all countries that significantly improved their scores since 2012 also strengthened their campaign finance laws.

“More than in any other major developed country, people in America believe that rich people buy elections,” said Scott Greytak, Advocacy Director for Transparency International’s U.S. office. “When people think their government is for sale, they stop believing in its future.”

“In the US, many of our laws on campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics were written almost 50 years ago. The world has changed since then, and we plan to learn from it by bringing political reforms from across the globe to American audiences,” continued Greytak.

Note to editors

Transparency International’s 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index reports incorporates data from Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem).

About the Corruption Perceptions Index

Since its inception in 1995, the [Corruption Perceptions Index](#) has become the leading global indicator of public sector corruption. In 2012, Transparency International revised the methodology used to construct the index to allow for comparison of scores from one year to the next. For more information, visit www.transparency.org/research/cpi

Media Contact:

Scott Greytak, Advocacy Director, Transparency International—U.S. Office

T: +1 614-668-0258

E: media-us@transparency.org

@transparencyUSA