

Obama Details Promises for Transparency

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Yesterday, we looked at President-elect Obama's stance on transparency [1]. As we noted, Obama's record on the issue isn't spotless, but he did make promises during the campaign to run a far more transparent presidency. This morning, Obama's transition Web site, change.gov [2], offered some details [3] on "using cutting-edge technologies" to create "a new level of transparency, accountability and participation for America's citizens."

Among the ideas listed on the site [4]:

Centralize Ethics and Lobbying Information for Voters: Obama and Biden will create a centralized Internet database of lobbying reports, ethics records and campaign finance filings in a searchable, sortable and downloadable format.

Require Independent Monitoring of Lobbying Laws and Ethics Rules: Obama and Biden will use the power of the presidency to fight for an independent watchdog agency to oversee the investigation of congressional ethics violations so that the public can be assured that ethics complaints will be investigated.

Create a Public "Contracts and Influence" Database: As president, Obama will create a "contracts and influence" database that will disclose how much federal contractors spend on lobbying, and what contracts they are getting and how well they complete them.

Expose Special Interest Tax Breaks to Public Scrutiny: Obama and Biden will ensure that any tax breaks for corporate recipients — or tax earmarks — are also publicly available on the Internet in an easily searchable format.

Sunlight Before Signing: Too often bills are rushed through Congress and to the president before the public has the opportunity to review them. As president, Obama will not sign any non-emergency bill without giving the American public an opportunity to review and comment on the White House Web site for five days.

Shine Light on Earmarks and Pork Barrel Spending: Obama's Transparency and Integrity in Earmarks Act will shed light on all earmarks by disclosing the name of the legislator who asked for each earmark, along with a written justification, 72 hours before they can be approved by the full Senate.

We'll be watching to see what happens after January 20th.

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1. <http://www.propublica.org/article/will-obama-keep-transparency-promises/>
2. <http://change.gov/>
3. <http://change.gov/agenda/technology>
4. <http://change.gov/agenda/ethics/>
5. http://www.propublica.org/forms/newsletter_daily_email?utm_campaign=subscribe&utm_source=propublica&utm_medium=article&utm_term=footer

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