

Altmire Calls for Tough Ethics Reform

(Washington, DC) - U.S. Representative Jason Altmire (PA-4) joined other Democratic members of the freshman class at a press conference today to call for the enactment of strong and meaningful ethics reform legislation in Congress. Congressman Altmire and his colleagues support the creation of a nonpartisan, independent entity that will vet, initiate and conduct investigations.

"The new majority in Congress was elected to clean up Washington," said Congressman Altmire. "Our first responsibility is to restore the public trust in government by passing meaningful ethics reform. The House of Representatives must represent the citizens of our districts, not the special interests."

In past years, due to a number of shortcomings in the current system, the House and Senate Ethics Committees have been ineffective in ferreting out corruption in Congress. Tacit agreements in past Congresses have resulted in an enforcement process that is often sluggish when an investigation is initiated. Currently, there are too many built-in conflicts of interest, and members of the ethics committees are placed in the untenable position of having to initiate complaints against and conduct investigations of friends and colleagues. Also, there is limited disclosure of committee actions, which encourages distrust.

"In the opening days of Congress, we made significant progress in fulfilling our promise to the American people by enacting new rules to change the way business is done in Washington," said Congressman Altmire. "But we need to go further in demonstrating that we are serious about safeguarding the integrity of this institution. I stand with my colleagues today in support of building increased independence and professionalism into the ethics enforcement process."

Congressman Altmire also joined a number of his freshmen colleagues in signing an April 23 letter to the Special Task Force on Ethics Enforcement. The letter called for the creation of an independent ethics entity. The task force is charged with exploring the creation of an outside ethics enforcement entity and is expected to report its recommendations to the House later this month.