

April 14 2005 - DeLay Misrepresents the Facts...Again

FACT CHECK:

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Democrats Voted Against 1997 Ethics Bill because of DeLay Supported Amendments which Weakened Ethics Rules

Washington, Dc - On the Floor today, DeLay accused Cardin and Hoyer of voting against the 1997 Ethics package. In fact, most Democrats (147) did vote against final passage. However, that was not because they opposed the Task Force Product, as DeLay incorrectly suggested, but rather because of an amendment that was adopted on the House Floor that was at odds with the Task Force bill, an amendment designed to weaken the ethics rules by prohibiting outside groups from filing ethics complaints against Members of Congress. It should come as no surprise that Mr. DeLay supported that amendment. This is an explanation of what actually happened in 1997:

The Members of the Bipartisan Task Force on Ethics passed, on a nearly unanimous basis, a package of ethics reforms that were then referred to the Rules Committee for eventual Floor consideration. An agreement was reached by the Task Force that no amendments would be allowed to this package unless both the Task Force Chairman Livingston and Co-Chair Cardin agreed on allowing the amendments (This agreement is noted in the Congressional Record, September 18, 1997 H7538).

However, the Rules Committee made in order several amendments that were not agreed to by Mr. Cardin. One of those amendments, which was adopted on the Floor, prohibited outside groups from filing ethics complaints. The original Task Force recommendation, after considerable deliberation and debate, provided for the filing of outside complaints. That is why all but one Democratic member of the Task Force ultimately voted against final passage. In the motion to recommit (see below), Mr. Cardin sought to return the final ethics package back to the one originally reported by the Task Force (with the mutually agreed to manager's amendment). The vote on the motion to recommit was the real vote on the Ethics Task Force recommendations (all Democrats on the Task Force and all but 20 Democrats voted for the motion to recommit- Roll Call Vote # 412).

Congressional Record of September 18, 1997-page H7571:

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. Speaker, the motion to recommit will return the rule to the original resolution approved by the bipartisan

task force. It would include the manager's amendment, but none of the other amendments. It will give this House a chance to vote on the rules package that was approved in a bipartisan manner.

Mr. Speaker, this will be the last opportunity that this House will have to reform the ethics process in a bipartisan manner. We have had a good debate on the floor. I think the issues have been well debated. I would hope that in the end the Members of this House would understand that it is not in our interests to amend the rules when the amendments are being passed by such a lopsided, partisan majority. That does not further the process. Ethics changes should be worked out in a bipartisan manner.

There is a lot of good in this resolution. The original report is what should be approved by this House. I would urge my colleagues to support the motion to recommit so that we can pass a bipartisan change in our rules package.