



April 12, 2023

Sen. Craig Hickman, Chair
Rep. Laura Supica, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
Maine State Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

RE: LD 1357 An Act to Impose an Expanded Prohibition on Lobbying for Former Executive Branch Employees

Chair Hickman, Chair Supica, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs: My name is David O'Brien and I am Policy Director for RepresentUs, the nation's leading nonpartisan anti-corruption organization. RepresentUs is submitting testimony today in support of LD 1357, and we thank Rep. Kessler for bringing forward this important legislation.

RepresentUs is a nonpartisan advocacy organization dedicated to the idea that the government should be representative of and accountable to the people. It advocates for policies to strengthen our democracy and provides activists with the resources and training to bring meaningful change. We unite people across the political spectrum to pass laws that hold corrupt politicians accountable, defeat special interests, and force the government to meet the needs of the American people.

As you likely know, lobbying takes many forms, but perhaps most frequently it is a person who is paid to influence decisions made by a public official to pass or defeat legislation. While there is nothing inherently wrong with sharing information with a public official, there is something insidious about a public official trading their past public position to promote their current private interests.

A cooling off period of one year for former Executive Branch employees, as proposed in LD 1357, is a sensible step in the right direction. It will help limit the fact, or even the perception, that a lobbyist is using their previous public status to promote the private interests of a client. According to the Pew Charitable Trust, there is already a [crisis of confidence in public institutions](#). When former public officials misuse their influence to further their private financial interests, it compounds that distrust in institutions.

At the federal level, 50% of Senators and 42% of Representatives become lobbyists after leaving Congress. Members of Congress who become lobbyists see their salaries increase on average 1,452%. For the private sector, the Return On Investment For Lobbying (ROIFL) is mindboggling. *For every dollar top companies spend lobbying, they get an average \$760 in federal support and tax savings, so the ROIFL is 76,000%.*

Maine has done a good job preventing former legislators from immediately changing roles to become lobbyists, but it is even more important to extend those policies to administration officials who have more individual authority to trade for favors when they reach the private sector.

Whether there are actual favors being traded, or just the perception of favors being traded, it is critical to limit the inappropriate influence that undermines the credibility of our public institutions.