

**Statement of Chairman Elijah E. Cummings**

**H.R. 964, the “Transition Team Ethics  
Improvement Act”**

**March 26, 2019**

The Ranking Member and Representative Meadows asked for the Committee to mark up H.R. 1.

The Oversight Committee was not the committee of primary jurisdiction for H.R. 1, but I committed to hold business meetings to consider discrete components of H.R. 1 that are in the Committee’s jurisdiction.

My hope is that in this way, we can work together to promote bipartisan measures to improve transparency and accountability.

Today, we will consider two bills that passed the House on March 8, 2019, as part of H.R. 1.

I introduced the Transition Team Ethics Improvement Act after the Government Accountability Office issued a report in 2017 about President Trump's presidential transition.

GAO reported that the Trump Transition Team required team members to sign an ethical code of conduct but failed to designate a transition team member responsible for enforcing it.

Ethics plans are important for presidential transitions because presidents-elect often hire transition team members who work in the private sector.

Unlike federal employees, members of the private sector are not subject to federal ethics laws.

This bill would require eligible presidential candidates, as a part of the memorandums of understanding they already have to sign with the General Services Administration, to agree to enforce ethics plans during the transition period.

The bill includes core elements of what those ethics plans should include, such as a description of how the transition team will address participation by lobbyists and individuals working for foreign governments.

The bill would also require that transition teams make the ethics plans they adopt publicly available, along with information about each transition team member.

Current law already requires presidents-elect to make public the names of each transition team member and the

sources of funding which support the activity of each team member.

This bill would require that the employment history and income over \$5,000 also be disclosed.

The bill also would require the President-elect to submit the names of transition team members who apply for security clearances, as well as the names of individuals who receive security clearances, to the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee and the Committee on Oversight and Reform.

The bill does **NOT** require transition teams to submit any information about the security clearance applications other than the names of those submitted and who receives a clearance.

Congress has a legitimate interest in knowing which transition members – who are not federal employees – may receive information about the nation’s most sensitive secrets.

Congress has a legitimate interest in knowing that the Trump Transition Team submitted Mike Flynn, Jr. – who promoted the false, quote, “**PizzaGate**” story – for a security clearance, as well as K.T. McFarland – who lied to the FBI about her role in Michael Flynn’s contacts with the Russian Ambassador.

This bill should not be partisan.

Chairman Ron Johnson introduced a bill in the Senate that includes many of the components of this bill.

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs approved that bill without opposition.

The peaceful transition of power from one party to another is the cornerstone of our democratic system.

We must do all we can to ensure the integrity of that process.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important legislation.