

## Ethical Progress

The Senate is advancing on lobbying reform. But important amendments still need an up-or-down vote.

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THE NEW SENATE majority leader, Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.), has moved to end debate this week on the ethics and lobbying reform legislation the Senate has taken up as its first order of business. This could be a sign of progress toward a good package, but there are numerous legislative land mines on the path to a successful conclusion. As the Senate resumes its consideration of the measure, it's important to ensure an opportunity for an up-or-down vote on critical amendments that would strengthen the reforms.

The first and most important of these is Mr. Reid's amendment on gift and travel rules. Essentially matching a provision approved by the House, Mr. Reid offered an amendment that would require lawmakers to pay charter rates for flights on private planes; under current rules, they only have to ante up the equivalent of first-class fares. Mr. Reid's amendment would also ban members of Congress from taking free meals, gifts and most travel from lobbyists and lobbying organizations, as the House has already voted to do. The Senate should ensure that this important change in Washington business-as-usual becomes part of the final legislation.

But it's not enough. Senators should also take up and pass rules to require lobbyists to disclose campaign contributions they collect -- or "bundle" -- for lawmakers, as Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) has proposed. In addition, if senators are serious about banning gifts, they should include the high-priced parties thrown at conventions to "honor" lawmakers, as Sen. Russell Feingold (D-Wis.) has proposed. They should resist a push to strip from the package a requirement that groups disclose how much they spend on "Astroturf" lobbying, or efforts to get the folks back home to contact lawmakers.

Mr. Reid has wisely backtracked on his initial opposition to a requirement for disclosure of a wide array of earmarked pet projects. The earmark disclosure rule pushed by Sen. Jim DeMint (R-S.C.) should be part of the final package, but here, too, additional amendments could bolster the impact of the reform. Lobbyists should be required to disclose the earmarks they are pursuing, and for whom, as Sen. Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) is pushing. An amendment by Sen. Tom Coburn (R-Okla.) to prohibit lawmakers from inserting earmarks that benefit their relatives would end an especially pernicious practice. And senators could do the House one better by going beyond mere disclosure requirements to make it possible, as Mr. DeMint has also proposed, to strip out provisions slipped into conference reports without being approved by either chamber.