1. Heading (Title Block)

H.B. No.___

119th Congress, 2025-2026

John Fay

2. The Title (Caption)

An Act relating to banning the Revolving Door between government and the lobbying industry.

3. Enacting Clause

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

4. Body of the Bill (Sections)

Section 1: Short Title

This Act may be cited as the "Ban the Revolving Door Act".

Section 2: Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to limit/end the "revolving door" of politicians and government workers taking private-sector lobbying positions after their time in the public sector is over. This will ensure that the government employees in question will be beholden more to their constituency than any private interest or large donor.

Section 3: Definitions

- *Revolving Door* - The empirically observed process in which ex-politicians and other staff use their connections to take on lucrative lobbying positions after leaving the government.
- *Lobbying* - The method by which private sector interests with considerable resources and influence use said resources to push elected officials to pass favorable legislation.

- *Cooling-off period* - The generally accepted anti-Revolving Door policy, which creates regulations about how long individuals have to wait before becoming a lobbyist.
- *Ex-government employee or official* - Former employees of the federal government, including members of Congress, elected members of the executive branch, or senior staff in either Congress or the executive branch (as defined by 5 U.S.C. § 405 section (a)(6)).

Section 4: Provisions

1. Increase "cooling off" periods to six years for ex-government employees.
   - Amend 18 U.S.C. § 207 sections (a)(2), (d)(1)(c), (e)(1)(A) by striking "2 years" and inserting "6 years".
   - Amend 18 U.S.C. § 207 sections (e)(1)(B)(i), (e)(2), (e)(5)(A), (e)(6)(A), (f)(1), and (b)(1) by striking "1 year" and inserting "6 years".
   - Amend 18 U.S.C. § 207(c)(1) by striking "1 year after the termination" and inserting "6 years after the termination".
2. Include mandatory disclosure of one's assets and private interests when working for the government.
   - Amend 5 U.S.C. § 13106(d)(1) by striking "$200" and inserting "no less than $10,000 and no more than $25,000, at the discretion of the congressional ethics committees".
   - Amend 5 U.S.C. § 13106(d)(1) by inserting at the end "Any punishment levied under sections (a), (b), (c), or (d) must be disclosed to the general public within 30 days of being levied".
3. Modify the current lobbying registration rules.
   - Amend definition 10 - *Lobbyist* of the Lobbying Disclosure Act by striking "20

percent" and inserting "10 percent".

- Amend 2 U.S.C. § 1603 by striking section (a)(3).
  - Removes dollar minimum from lobbying registration requirements.

Section 5: Enforcement

As outlined in 18 U.S.C. § 216, the Attorney General has the authority to file charges against anyone believed to be willfully violating 18 U.S.C. § 207 (regarding cooling-off periods). The Office of Government Ethics will continue handling mandated financial disclosures as established in the Ethics in Government Act, on top of all rules outlined by the House Committee on Ethics and the Senate's Select Committee on Ethics.

Section 6: Penalties

All penalties for violations are those outlined in 18 U.S.C. § 216, as well as the listed modification to 5 U.S.C. § 13106(d)(1).

5. Analysis:

Since the 1970s, the rate of retired senators and House representatives who become lobbyists after their terms has steadily increased, with the current number at around 50%. This number represents only those who register as lobbyists, and there are many more who do not register but do lobbying-adjacent work. Part of the reason for this is that lobbying registration requirements as they exist currently present loopholes to be exploited. According to the Lobbying Disclosure Act, a lobbyist is only defined as one if they spend at least 20% of their time lobbying, which allows politicians to evade scrutiny by spending just under that time lobbying. In addition, current law requires a specific dollar amount as an income minimum to register, which changes over time to account for inflation.

Lobbyists themselves will admit that congressional experience (whether as a staffer or policymaker) is hugely relevant, not just for learning about the political process and how to argue with policymakers, but also for gaining personal connections with people in power that can be useful in the future. There is also strong evidence that having worked in government previously could cause an increase in the prospective salaries of lobbyists. There is empirical evidence that institutions that lobby gain more from the government than those who don't, and hiring even just one former congressperson or staffer gets more attention from those in power. Introducing a cooling-off period to become a lobbyist after serving in public office has been known to reduce people's perceived value of a lobbyist position, since the value of connections tends to shrink over time as others leave office. Although one to two years is standard right now, proponents for revolving door legislation suggest a six-year period, which is the longest period at any level (currently used in Florida's state government, it is also generally popular among voters to have periods of at least five years). Additionally, there is significant concern about the ability of an ex-official to join a foreign lobby after their term, thus potentially favoring another country's interests over our own. These likelihoods all increase with the relevance of one's position in Congress, especially for committee chairs.

Finally, both data and current events suggest that current asset disclosure rules are insufficient to prevent wrongdoing. There are numerous instances of politicians making suspicious trades in the context of what happens in the immediate aftermath, and yet they are able to escape scrutiny. One of the big reasons for this in current law is that the first-time punishment for late disclosure is only $200, an insignificant sum for a congressmember. The late-filing penalty is specifically important because late filing is often used by members of Congress to avoid disclosures before relevant moments, such as elections. Secondly, although

asset disclosures themselves must be made public under 5 U.S.C. § 13107, there is no enforcement mechanism for violations and penalties to be made visible to the public. Currently, disclosure is enforced by the Office of Government Ethics and the House and Senate Committees on Ethics, so they have the relevant authority to enforce these new regulations as well.

6. Bipartisan Appeal:

Historically, revolving door legislation tends to be praised as "common-sense", and there are many examples of Democrats and Republicans working together on the issue. In 2019, there was a bipartisan bill proposed by Michael Bennett (D), Cory Gardner (R), and Jon Tester (D) that would have banned current Congress members from ever becoming lobbyists and proposed a 6-year cooling-off period for staffers. In addition, in 2025 Michigan State Rep. Mike Harris (R) and the Michigan House Government Operations Committee passed legislation increasing the cooling-off period to two years.

Within the context of this bill, Democrats and Republicans will agree that the ideas presented take major steps in cracking down on the abuses of power that lead to the Revolving Door. Republicans will be keen to prevent lawmakers from "gaming the system" by manipulating their lobbying time to avoid registration rules, and may also agree to allow for greater disclosures to reveal conflicts of interest before they cause problems.

7. Procedural/Administrative Provisions:

Severability: If the application of any individual provision of this Act to any person or circumstance would be overturned by a court decision, the remainder of the Act shall survive unaffected.

Effective date: This Act will take effect on those leaving office on July 1st, 2026.

Rule of Construction: Although lobbying is considered protected petitioning of the government under the First Amendment, the Supreme Court has ruled in the past that narrowly targeted restrictions on government employees are not unconstitutional.

Repealer clause: No act is being repealed, but 18 U.S.C. § 207, 5 U.S.C. § 13106, 2 U.S.C. § 1603, and the Lobbying Disclosure Act are being amended.

8. Summary:

There are three core changes this bill would create, which have to do with cooling-off periods, disclosure requirements, and lobbying registration requirements. The first provision changes all cooling-off periods to six years rather than one or two. The second provision increases the penalty for late asset disclosures from a mere $200 to a far more significant $10,000-$25,000. Finally, the third provision modifies the lobbying registration requirements to include anyone who spends between 10% and 20% of their working time lobbying, while also removing the minimum dollar contribution to be required to register.

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