

## People are tired of politics as usual

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This past week, Charlotte County saw the culture of politics over ethics first hand when White House Deputy Chief of Staff, Karl Rove addressed the Charlotte County Republican Party at their annual Lincoln-Reagan Dinner. Rove is under investigation for lobbying senior political appointees at 16 federal agencies to withhold support for projects in districts represented by Democrats, including our district. This is a prime example of the problem in Washington.

Rove wants to block funding of critical public safety projects in Charlotte County. Projects like widening transportation routes for safe evacuation in a hurricane, or building a new library capable of storing and protecting the county's historical treasures, or improving internet safety in our middle schools, are not political footballs to be tossed around by those who are entrusted with our citizens' growth and well being. Your county commissioners, regardless of party affiliation, are working closely with my office to bring these projects home to Charlotte County.

People are tired of politics as usual. We have serious challenges ahead that require unwavering bipartisan cooperation. True political "genius" is not the "divide and conquer" politics of wedge issues and fear. It is the ability to bring people together and build consensus out of disagreement, to form unity out of diversity, and mutual respect from anger. E Pluribus Unum. Out of many, one.

As part of the freshman class that was elected with a mandate to clean up business in Washington, I am working to facilitate real change by holding all of our leaders to the highest standards of ethics and integrity. In the first 100 hours of Congress, we succeeded, with bi-partisan support, in getting rid of lobbyists-sponsored meals, gifts and trips. We put the government back on a "pay-as-you-go" financial footing which, when combined with our earmark reform legislation, changed the way Washington works.

With fellow freshman Congressman Baron Hill of Indiana and others, I am working to convince leaders on both sides of the aisle to take ethics reform a step further. I recently cosponsored legislation that would create an independent ethics commission to hold Congress accountable.

Creating an independent ethics commission with the authority to blow the whistle on questionable behavior would pull the rug out from under corruption and shine light into every corner of the Capitol. It would depoliticize ethics enforcement and get the fox out of the hen house once and for all.

However, earlier this year, House leadership decided to create a task force to study the issue, rather than make significant changes to the current ethics process. In my opinion, there is no need to further study the matter. Actions of members on both sides of the aisle - from Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham's pay-to-play politics with defense contractors, to Rep. Jefferson stuffing \$90,000 in cash in his freezer, to the Republican Leadership's negligence in the Mark Foley scandal - show that we have a serious problem that demands immediate attention. The time has come to act.

Congressman Tim Mahoney

Florida's 16th Congressional District