

ALERT

# Bipartisan Lawmakers Propose Amendments to FARA, Tax Law, and Election Laws to Combat Foreign Influence in U.S. Policy

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June 21, 2022

On June 16, 2022, a bipartisan group of lawmakers in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the *Fighting Foreign Influence Act*, which would impose a range of new disclosure requirements and limitations on think tanks, former government officials, and political campaigns. The current proposal would, among other changes, amend the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) to impose a lifetime ban on some former government officials from ever lobbying for a foreign government or foreign political party.

The bill, found here, contains three main provisions: a requirement that think tanks and other tax-exempt organizations disclose foreign donations, a ban on select former U.S. officials from ever lobbying for a foreign principal, and a requirement that political campaigns verify that anyone making an online contribution has a valid U.S. address. Specifically:

- The bill would amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to require tax-exempt organizations (including think-tanks) disclose when a foreign government or foreign political party makes aggregate contributions and gifts of more than \$50,000. Once an organization discloses the gift, the government would make this information publicly available in a searchable database.
- The bill would amend FARA by inserting a new section that prohibits any former Member of Congress, “senior political appointee,” or general or flag officer of the armed forces from ever acting as the agent of a foreign principal. A “senior political appointee” would include any full-time senior position

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appointed by the President or Vice President or any appointee in the Senior Executive Service but would not include the Senior Foreign Service.

- The bill would amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to require political campaigns to verify that anyone making an online contribution has a valid address (using a credit card's three-digit CVV code) before making a campaign contribution.

The bill's lead sponsor, Rep. Jared Golden (D-ME-2), was joined by cosponsors Rep. Katie Porter (D-CA-45), Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ-4), and Rep. Lance Gooden (R-TX-5). As of mid-June, there is no related bill in the Senate.

Notably, the introduction of the *Fighting Foreign Influence Act* comes on the heels of a series of high-profile investigations by the U.S. Department of Justice into foreign influence in U.S. policymaking. Earlier in June, a public affidavit shared investigation details regarding retired General John R. Allen's alleged failure to register under FARA after acting as an agent of Qatar's government. General Allen resigned from his position at the Brookings Institution, a prominent Washington think tank, after investigation details became public. Rep. Golden cited these allegations against General Allen when he introduced the *Fighting Foreign Influence Act* and described the incident as a reason to change existing laws.