

The House Oversight and Government Reform Committee on Wednesday passed legislation authored by Rep. Peter Welch (D-Vt.) that would ban individuals and companies convicted of bribing foreign officials from contracting with the federal government.

Welch's Overseas Contractor Reform Act (H.R. 5366), which was approved by the committee with a voice vote, will now move to a full vote in the House. The legislation would automatically debar federal contractors convicted under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits American companies and individuals from unlawfully influencing foreign officials.

"This vote is a step towards restoring accountability and transparency to the federal contracting process," Welch said. "When contractors like Blackwater violate the rule of law, they undermine not only our nation's mission and values, but also the safety of our troops. Such companies have no business profiting off American contracts."

Watch video from the hearing:

Welch wrote the legislation in response to an ongoing investigation into whether Xe Services – formerly known as Blackwater Worldwide – bribed Iraqi officials following a 2007 Baghdad shooting that left 17 Iraqis dead. At an Oversight and Government Reform subcommittee hearing in June, Rep. Welch questioned officials as to why the company continued to receive U.S. government contracts despite troubling allegations that it made \$1 million in secret payments to Iraqi officials after this incident.

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H.R. 5366 would immediately debar those convicted – and sever any ongoing contracts – 30 days after all possible appeals of a Foreign Corrupt Practices Act conviction are exhausted.

