

How Chile's Recent Political Scandals Led to Reforms

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In this blog post, Matt Ellis and Quinnie Lin* discuss recent work by the Chilean Presidential Advisory Council Against Corruption, Influence-Peddling, and Conflicts of Interest (Council). The Council was founded by the Chilean government following a series of political scandals that reduced public confidence in the government. "To date, the Chilean Congress has successfully passed laws in the areas of disclosing interest and private assets, civic and ethics education, and campaign finance. The areas where legislative proposals are making progress include reform of the civil service, prevention of corruption in land use, empowering regulators, reforming regulation bodies and strengthening the corporate governance of firms. Areas with little or no progress include revolving door regulations, municipality reform, reform of public procurement and defense spending and the creation of the Office of Ombudsman," Ellis and Lin said.

The authors said the Council's efforts also helped improve the Chilean government's reputation. Eduardo Engle, who heads the Council, "credited the success of the Council's proposals to the role that Chilean civil society and media have played in reporting on the political scandals and supporting the work of the Council," Ellis and Lin said, adding, "in a May 2016 survey, 60 percent of the respondents answered 'yes' to the question, 'Do you think that Congress passing most of the measures proposed by the [Council] will restore public confidence in politics?' The success of the Council's proposals led Engel to conclude, '[Political] scandals are opportunities if you approach them correctly.'"

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