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Americans for Less Secrecy, More Democracy



Press Release

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Open Government Advocates Urge Obama Administration to Announce a Participatory Process for Developing Transparency Policy Recommendations

WASHINGTON, May 21, 2009 – More than 60 organizations and advocates concerned with government transparency recently called on the Obama administration to initiate a formal, transparent process that includes public input before making recommendations to the president on approaches to make government transparent, collaborative, and participatory.

On January 21, President Barack Obama asked his staff to develop recommendations for an Open Government Directive by May 21. Lead responsibility was assigned to the president's Chief Technology Officer, who was not nominated until April 18 and awaits Senate confirmation.

The open government advocates asked the Obama administration to postpone development of recommendations until it undertakes a transparent process that involves opportunities for public participation. We are excited about today's announced initiatives by the Obama administration, which include both the use of new media to engage the public and the more traditional process of announcements in the *Federal Register*, to identify topics on which the administration seeks public input, although we hoped that the administration would have developed some fuller ideas to share for comment at this point.

The groups also requested that comments from federal agencies, Congress, and the public regarding ideas for the directive be made publicly available in order to foster the collaborative principle called for in Obama's January 21 memo. The Obama administration's actions today leave such disclosure uncertain.

"The open government community was energized by President Obama's early commitment to making the federal government more transparent," said Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org. "We are eager to see his promise of openness and accountability become reality, and we are ready to work with the administration to reach that goal."

"We believe the Obama administration is committed to making government as transparent, collaborative, and participatory as possible," said Gary D. Bass, Executive Director of OMB Watch. "We are pleased the administration seems ready to employ transparent, collaborative, and participatory techniques in identifying ways to achieve these goals. At the same time, we would like to have a complete understanding of the process the administration will use in developing the recommendations to the president."

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OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition transcending party lines of more than 65 consumer and good government groups, librarians, environmentalists, labor, journalists, and others – focused on pushing back governmental secrecy and promoting openness.

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