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April 4, 2011

Dear Ms. Bennett:

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on the selection of the next Director of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) with me. A diversity of viewpoints is always welcome.

As you may know, CRS is the only legislative branch agency that guarantees confidentiality in all of its interactions with Congress. Various legislative provisions, policy statements, and communications from Congress have emphasized that communications from CRS to Congress are constitutionally protected, confidential, and subject to congressional control. For example, Senate Resolution 396, 96th Congress, declared that communications between CRS on the one hand, and Members and committees on the other, are confidential and that such communications "are an integral part of the legislative process and privileged under the Speech or Debate Clause of the Constitution."

Though CRS has no direct public mission, at present the public has unfettered access to the full inventory of CRS Reports for the Congress at no cost through the office of any Member or committee. Members of Congress, acting in their constitutionally-mandated representational capacity, have long made CRS products available to interested persons either directly in hard copy format, or more recently through their office or committee websites. CRS best provides the taxpayer with value for its money by fulfilling its statutory mandate to serve committees and Members of Congress with confidential, objective and authoritative research and analysis on all legislative issues.

I am confident that the next Director of CRS will continue to work closely with Congress on these issues.

I thank you again for expressing your thoughts on this matter.

Sincerely,

James H. Billington

The Librarian of Congress

Ms. Amy Bennett
Open the Government

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