February 19, 2013

Chairman Darrell Issa  
US House of Representatives  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
2157 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Elijah Cummings  
US House of Representatives  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
2471 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

The undersigned organizations, concerned with government openness and accountability, are writing to thank you and share our support for your work to hold agencies accountable for implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Your February 4th, 2013 letter to the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice poses important questions regarding OIP’s role in government-wide FOIA policy implementation, compliance, and enforcement.

We greatly appreciate the breadth and detail of your requests for information from OIP. As you know, outdated FOIA regulations, excessive fee assessments, growing FOIA backlogs, and the misuse of exemptions are issues that continually frustrate FOIA requesters and are major concerns for many in the transparency community.

As you point out in your letter, FOIA is an important option the public has for accessing information about the government’s activities. This tool is much less meaningful, however, if the public cannot use it to get timely access to the information to which they are entitled. Your letter is an excellent step towards identifying where a lack of oversight and attention on the part of OIP is contributing to these problems. We hope you will share your responses from OIP with the public, and look forward to future oversight hearings.

Thank you, again, for your attention to this issue of critical importance to transparent and accountable government. We welcome your continued oversight on this issue. To discuss these issues in greater detail, please contact Patrice McDermott, Executive Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, at pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org or 202-332-6736.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries
American Association of University Professors
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
American Library Association
American Society of News Editors
Association of American Publishers
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee – BORDC
Californians Aware
Cause of Action
Center for Effective Government (formerly OMB Watch)
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington – CREW
Defending Dissent Foundation
DownsizeDC.org, Inc.
Electronic Frontier Foundation – EFF
Electronic Privacy Information Center – EPIC
First Amendment Coalition
Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism
Freedom to Read Foundation
Friends of the Earth
Government Accountability Project – GAP
iSolon.org
The James Madison Project
Liberty Coalition
Mine Safety and Health News
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Coalition for History
National Freedom of Information Coalition
National Priorities Project
National Security Archive
National Security Counselors
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight – POGO
Society of American Archivists
Society of Professional Journalists
Special Libraries Association
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse – TRAC
Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University
Understanding Government
Utah Foundation for Open Government
Washington Civil Rights Council
Washington Coalition for Open Government