



How to Talk About Accountability, Oversight and Transparency

Communicating Open the Government’s 2018 Research

The One-Minute Overview: *Across party lines, Americans believe that laws can be strengthened or enforced to hold the government accountable. Voters on both sides of the aisle share concerns that politicians are playing by their own rules in order to enrich themselves and their campaign contributors, instead of being responsive to the people who elected them. Through fair oversight and public transparency, we can ensure accountable politicians, better policy, and a stronger democracy.”*

Key Statistics

The following are findings from the poll to help you show the need and make the case for oversight, transparency, and accountability:

- 78% of voters believe democracy is preferable to any other type of government
- 52% of voters want to see new laws to improve government accountability, oversight and transparency
- 81% of voters think decisions made in secret are bad for democracy
- 85% of voters agree that they have a right to know what the government is doing
- 72% of voters say government accountability efforts fail more often than they succeed
- 62% of voters do believe accountability in government is possible
- 64% of voters are interested in identifying ways to get involved with non-governmental nonprofit organizations to work toward greater accountability in government
- 80% of voters believe that if lawmakers and public officials are held accountable, they will perform better on issues like the economy, health care and education
- Over 40% of voters worry that decisions are politically motivated by the party in power

Communication Do’s and Don’ts

Open the Government’s poll revealed key words that motivate the public on issues of oversight, transparency and accountability. Specific concepts to keep in mind include:

- Making sure politicians are playing by the same rules as regular people
- Rooting out government fraud, abuse and corruption
- Fair, unbiased and bipartisan government
- Improving checks and balances

Do	Don’t
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do connect these issues to their outcomes in more tangible areas such as how it will help lawmakers “do what they say they will do.” • Do focus on accountability as the key value, with oversight and transparency as processes that address voters’ desire to be able to hold government accountable. • Do give a “national security” caveat to discussions of transparency. • Do talk about everyone “playing by the same rules” and about following regulations and laws effectively and fairly. • Do find ways to demonstrate oversight used to investigate wrongdoing and particularly bipartisan success stories. • Do show Republicans how these proposals will make current laws more effective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don’t talk about oversight and transparency in a vacuum. • Don’t forget that voters have a crisis of trust in government, so solutions that call for government officials to be the implementer have to be demonstrably fair and effective. • Don’t single out one branch of government when addressing a broad audience. • Don’t demonstrate oversight with examples that will be seen as partisan motivated.