

Steering Committee

Steven Aftergood
Federation of
American Scientists

Gary Bass
Bauman Foundation

Tom Blanton
National Security
Archive

Rick Blum
Sunshine in Government
Initiative

Lynne Bradley
American Library
Association

Danielle Brian*
Project On Government
Oversight

Kevin Goldberg
American Society of
News Editors

Conrad Martin
Fund for Constitutional
Government
(Ex-officio member)

**Katherine McFate/
Sean Moulton**
OMB Watch

Michael Ostrolenk
Liberty Coalition

Thomas Susman
National Freedom of
Information Coalition

David Sobel
Electronic Frontier
Foundation

Anne Weismann
Citizens for
Responsibility & Ethics
in Washington

John Wonderlich
Sunlight Foundation

* Chair

Patrice McDermott
Executive Director

Amy Bennett
Assistant Director

Katherine Hawkins
National Security Fellow

Abby Paulson
Program Associate

Mary Treacy
Outreach Coordinator

Year-End Report - 2013

For the OpenTheGovernment.org coalition (OTG), 2013 was a period of accelerated growth in our leadership role in charting a path to greater openness and an improved Freedom of Information Act, and working to leverage the US's participation in the Open Government Partnership to push for meaningful openness reforms.

As described below, our notable successes over the last year include:

- We coordinated and published an internationally-praised evaluation of the US government implementation of the first open government National Action Plan and created a model National Action Plan to set the bar even higher for the second plan.
- OTG staff coordinated community efforts to improve the Freedom of Information Act and successfully [combated attempts](#) to roll back the right to know in the Farm Bill.
- Amplified transparency issues in the wake of revelations about the National Security Agency's mass surveillance programs.

The Difference OTG Makes

Delivering Results in the Open Government Partnership

OpenTheGovernment.org set a high bar for civil society engagement in the National Action Plans created through the Open Government Partnership.

To create an [unprecedented evaluation](#) of the government's implementation of the plan, OTG worked with more than thirty civil society organizations and academic institutions to develop and apply evaluation metrics to the government's performance.

In addition to scoring whether the government met the letter of its commitment, evaluators were also asked to rate the government's efforts to collaborate with civil society organizations, movement toward civil society recommendations, and meaningfulness and sustainability of the government's efforts. The report also included suggestions—based on the

experience of this evaluation process—for how the government could improve the next National Action Plan.



Executive Director Patrice McDermott shares US civil society's experiences at the OGP Summit in London.

At the Open Government Partnership Summit in London, OTG joined civil society groups and government representatives from around the world to reflect upon the successes and challenges officials and advocates faced in implementing openness initiatives outlined in countries' National Action Plans. During the Summit, Executive Director Patrice McDermott participated on a panel discussing the impact of OGP chairmanship on civil society advocacy. OTG

staff also shared the US civil society evaluation process and efforts to shape the US' second National Action Plan.

Although the first US National Action Plan included commitments related to most of our policy priorities, they were not game-changing. To push for greater ambition in the US government's second National Action Plan, OTG mobilized a wide range of civil society groups to create a [model National Action Plan](#). The proposed commitments in the model Plan outline in detail the steps the Administration should take to have significant effect on government openness in the next two years. As a result of this and our ongoing discussions with the administration, the second National Action Plan also includes several important commitments related to our policy priorities.

The second National Action Plan will be implemented over two years. OTG is once again creating teams of advocates to work on each of the commitments in the plan. OTG acts as a liaison among the teams, the Administration, and other government officials involved in executing the plan. With the support of these teams, OTG will release periodic progress reports on the implementation leading up the final evaluation in 2015.

Protecting and Improving the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

OTG has played a crucial role in building a consensus on needed FOIA reforms, and pressuring Congress and the Administration to act on these reforms. Congressional staff frequently reach out to OTG on issues of FOIA reform. Many of our community's



Assistant Director Amy Bennett kicks off the FOIA Summit

suggested reforms are represented in the recently passed House bill, [FOIA Implementation and Oversight Act](#). OTG also helped organize an effort to discuss with Senate staff areas where the proposed House bill does not go far enough.

Efforts to [improve FOIA](#) were further amplified at the [FOIA Summit](#) hosted by the coalition on October 10th and 11th. This event brought together more than 40 advocates, litigators, and journalists to decide areas where the community could work together to improve access to government information through the FOIA, and to create concrete action plans to do so.

OTG staff also work closely with staff from the Office of Government Information Services to support the office's efforts to make FOIA work better for agencies and requesters.

OpenTheGovernment.org received funding through the World Resources Institute to conduct a case study of the FOIA in the United States as part of a World Bank examination of right to information laws. OTG hired a public policy fellow, Shannon Alexander, to research and draft the report. The report will be made available through the World Bank Right to Know website, but no date for release has been set.

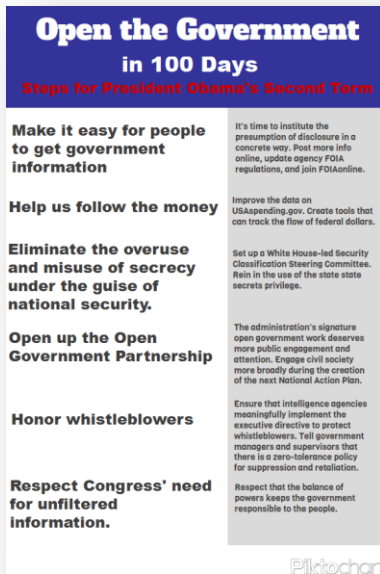


Executive Director Patrice McDermott leads the session on records management at OTG's FOIA Summit.

Reducing Secrecy

The surveillance revelations that emerged throughout 2013 once again ignited discussions about the US government's secrecy in the national security sphere. The documents disclosed by Edward Snowden were the first shock grenades thrown into the room and the reverberations have continued – and intensified – with the revelations that the intelligence community has been forced to divulge. The programs that have mobilized many of OTG's partners and the American public are rooted in the growing issue of excessive national security secrecy.

OTG recognized a lack of concrete proposals to increase transparency in legislation aimed at reforming the government's surveillance policies and has taken a leading role in raising the profile of transparency issues in surveillance reform. We brought together about two dozen advocates working on the issue to begin to develop proposals and set up a network of advocates working to curb secret law. Together with these partners and colleagues, we have begun a discussion with the Administration, the Congress, and others about the fact that many authoritative interpretations of law are classified and otherwise withheld from the public. OTG also hired a National Security Fellow to help refine and promote these transparency reforms.



OTG created a graphic to break down our proposed 100 Day Agenda to kick-start openness in the President's second term. View the graphic [here](#).

Ongoing Programmatic Work

In January 2013, OTG published an open letter to the President outlining a [second-term agenda](#) for the Obama administration to fulfill its openness legacy addressed the need for greater White House leadership on continuing declassification efforts, the prosecutions of whistleblowers, and troubling language in the signing statement accompanying the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act. The agenda was also [published](#) in another form in *The Hill* and in several other news outlets. OTG meets frequently with White House staff to share ideas about improving government openness. This agenda grew out of OTG's continuing work developing and updating [community policy priorities](#), a resource maintained by OpenTheGovernment.org but developed in partnership with more than 20 openness organizations.

On March 15th, 2013 OTG joined with the First Amendment Center to host its annual celebration of Freedom of Information Day. The [event](#) was held at the Newseum and live-streamed. The event focused on addressing the roadblocks to openness. Each discussion included a speaker outlining how the Obama Administration could make real progress on an open government issue in the short-and medium-term, and a response from the government or a former government employee. The discussion centered on the community's top policy priorities: FOIA and proactive disclosure, spending transparency, declassification, and ethics disclosure. The afternoon featured clips from the upcoming documentary, "War on Whistleblowers," and a discussion with featured journalists and whistleblowers from the film.

On October 1st, OTG published its annual [Secrecy Report](#), highlighting the secrecy issues surrounding the National Security Agency's (NSA) surveillance programs, and detailing the stagnation of secrecy indicators. The surveillance revelations cast serious doubt on the accuracy and the meaningfulness of the government's statistics about surveillance under the USA PATRIOT Act. As a special section for this year's Secrecy Report, we presented "5 Big Ideas" to kick-start the kinds of massive changes needed to create noticeable difference



Panelists discuss proactive disclosure at our 2013 Sunshine Week event.

in the level of secrecy in the federal government. Former Representative Mickey Edwards also provided [insight](#) into possible reforms for intelligence oversight to accompany the report's release. For the first time this year, the report included [video analysis](#) of the statistics from members of OTG's Steering Committee.

The staff of OTG continues to pursue opportunities to work with new and traditional media to educate them on openness and secrecy and to learn how to convey our message to and through them. With the help of a consultant, OTG staff and steering committee members have placed numerous opinion pieces in national and local news outlets spreading hard-hitting messages on the need for open government, freedom of information, and more. Web statistics show that visitors are increasingly using "OpenTheGovernment.org" as a search term to find the site.

Through these efforts, OTG communicates open government priorities, news, action alerts, and strategy in ways that are engaging for wider audiences. Coalition staff frequently create graphics and other media to better explain OTG's priorities and process. For example, OTG explained [roadblocks to the FOIA process](#), [classification terms](#), and US civil society's [engagement](#) with the US government on the National Action plan. OTG increased its following on Twitter by nearly 80 percent and increased its following on Facebook by 64 percent in 2013.

Examples of our Work in our Focus Areas

Letters to the Administration and Congress

Improving Access

GAO Report Offers Recommendations to Help OGIS <http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4150>

Multiple Efforts to Bar Access to Ag Info Sprouting on Capitol Hill:

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4079>

Improving the FOIA Reform Bill, HR 1211: <http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3984>

Secrecy Check: FOIA By the Numbers: <http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4013>

Opening Government

When Agencies Get it Right: Highlighting Best Openness Practices

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3886>

Public Information About Government Data Will Improve With Obama Policy

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3975>

Supreme Court Ruling Hurts Open Government

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3999>

Reducing Secrecy

Leaked White Paper Re-Opens Debate on Drone Attacks on Citizens; We Still Want the OLC Memos

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3852>

Signing Statement on Defense Authorization Bill a Bad Sign for Transparency?

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3833>

Hope for More Transparency on Drone Strikes, But the Law is Still Secret:

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4018>

'Rethinking' The Bill of Rights? In Secret?

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4019>

Time for Answers on Domestic Spying Program

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4010>

Through the Transparency Lens: An NSA Domestic Spying Primer

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4048>

Senators' Tax Code Input Will Be Kept Under Wraps for 50 Years

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4077>

Legislation Aimed at Reforming Classification System Introduced

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4104>

Preserving Records

Latest Records Management Self Assessments Show Minimal Change

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4112>

Outreach

A Valentine's Day Poem from OpenTheGovernment.org:

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3861>

Growing Open Government: Zooming Infographic

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3891>

How's FOIA Looking?

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/sites/default/files/Rose%20colored%20glasses%20FOIA.png>

OUT with Secrecy IN with Sunshine

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3689>

Mapping An Open Government Legacy: Draft the Second National Action Plan

<http://sites.google.com/site/draftingnap2/>

FOIA Summit Site: <https://sites.google.com/site/foiasummit2013/home>

Join Us and FOIA on the Fourth

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4019>

The FOIA Process and Common Problems

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/3973>

Interactive: A Timeline of US Civil Society's Involvement with the OGP

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4142>

Former-Representative Mickey Edwards on Restoring Accountability to National Security Programs

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4145>

Shared Agenda for Openness and Accountability

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/node/4074>

Bi-weekly Updates: <http://www.openthegovernment.org/newsletter>

OGP US Civil Society Blog: www.opengovpartners.org/us

OpenTheGovernment.org In the News

[Watchdog: Transparency advocates see tough year, growing 'Windsorgate' scandal at EPA ahead](#)

[Washington Examiner, January 2, 2013]

[What's Next After Obama's Re-election?](#)

[Gov Exec, January 4, 2013]

[FOIA Online gets mixed marks at three months](#)

[Next Gov, January 18, 2013]

[Obama should step up enforcement of agency transparency, advocates argue](#)

[Gov Exec, January 18, 2013]

[Transparency Tripped Up](#)

[Washington Free Beacon, January 22, 2013]

[Has Obama Kept His Open-Government Pledge?](#)

[ProPublica, February 11, 2013]

[A FOIA Fiesta](#)

[Washington Free Beacon, February 27, 2013]

[Open Government Groups: FDA Redactions Rules Skirt Law](#)

[Associated Press, ABC News, Washington Post, San Francisco Gate, Miami Herald, Yahoo! Australia, The Huffington Post, and more than 60 news outlets in total, March 8, 2013]

[Obama Administration Made 'Baby Steps' Toward Open Government: Report](#)

[Huffington Post, March 12, 2013]

[Let the Sunshine In](#)

[Washington Free Beacon, March 12, 2013]

[Obama Secrecy Unacceptable](#)

[Lancaster Online, March 16, 2013]

[Critics: Congressional Spending Requests Less Open](#)

[USA Today, April 1, 2013]

[CISPA Still Terrible for Transparency](#)

[CRN Buzz, April 4, 2013]

[For Good Government Groups, What Did All That Access Earn?](#)

[Watchdog.org, April 11, 2013]

[Feds' Personal E-mail Use Creates Potential Records Gap](#)

[Federal Computer Week, May 7, 2013]

[Open Data Order, Policy Ushers in New Norm](#)

[Federal News Radio, May 10, 2013]

[Open Government Experts Raise Concerns About "Mosaic Effect" in Open Data Policy](#)

[E Pluribus Unum, May 20, 2013]

[Unredacted FOIA Responses Down, Exemption Use Up, Shows DOJ OIP Reports](#)

[FierceGovernment IT, June 5, 2013]

[Bipartisan Group of Senators Introduce Bill to End Secret Law](#)

[Albany Tribune, June 11, 2013]

[NSA Scandal Boosts Privacy Advocates](#)

[Politico, June 13, 2013]

[Supreme Court Urged to Speed Up Financial Disclosures](#)

[Legal Times, July 25, 2013]

[Groups Want US SC Justices to Post Annual Financial Disclosure Forms](#)

[Legal News Line, July 26, 2013]

[Long-Sleepy Privacy Board Gets New Life After NSA Disclosures](#)

[GovExec, August 4, 2013]

[Five Federal Secrets That Have Come Out in 2013](#)

[GIMBY, August 7, 2013]

[Obama Promises Intel Reforms in Wake of NSA Leaks](#)

[Defense News, August 9, 2013]

[Making Government Accountable—Even During a Shutdown](#)

[GovLoop, October 8, 2013]

[Obama Secretly Signing Away US Sovereignty](#)

[WND Politics, October 15, 2013]

[Coalition Presses White House to Make Secret Surveillance Laws Open to the Public](#)

[E Pluribus Unum, October 22, 2013]

[Advocacy Groups Insist that Obama Reveal ‘Secret Law’ Justifying Drones, NSA Surveillance](#)

[Huffington Post, October 22, 2013]

[Snowden Case Threw ‘Hand Grenade’ Into Government Secrecy, Openness Expert Says](#)

[Federal News Radio, October 23, 2013]

[US Rights Groups Push for Declassification of Counterterrorism Documents](#)

[Deutsche Welle, November 1, 2013]

[White House Inflated Transparency Achievements](#)

[Washington Free Beacon, November 1, 2013]

[US Vows to Modernize FOIA, Expand Open Data in Updated National Action Plan](#)

[Fierce Government IT, November 6, 2013]

[Farm Bill Could Hide Farm Locations from the Public](#)

[ABC News, November 7, 2013]

[Senate Committee Unanimously Passes Sen. Warner’s Bipartisan DATA Act](#)

[August Free Press, November 7, 2013]

[White House Promises More Transparency in Second Open Government Plan](#)

[The Verge, December 7, 2013]

[New White House Open Government Plan Looks Good on Paper, Say Transparency Advocates](#)

[FierceGovernmentIT, December 9, 2013]

Op-Ed Placement

[Obama II: Bush-Cheney Redux](#)

[Best Southwest Focus on the News, Crookston Daily Times, St. Marys Daily Press, Fall River Herald News, Kane Republican, Monroe Sunday News, Ridgway Record, Wicked Local Fall River, Houston News, February 2013]

[Transparency and Open Government](#)

[The Hill, Battle Creek Enquirer, Greenville Sun, Tarboro Daily Southerner, Houma Courier, Thibodaux Daily Comet, Poteau Daily News and Sun, Kane Republican, Chillicothe Gazette, Deming Headlight, Huntsville Item, January 2013]

[White House Must Embrace FOIAonline](#)

[Nashua Telegraph, Guam Pacific Daily News, [Mobridge, SD] Tribune, [Alexandria, LA] Town Talk, [Muncie, IN] Star Press, Silo Breaker, SunshineWeek.org, March 2013]

[Your Right to Know vs. Colleges: Column](#)

[USA Today, Wausau Daily Herald, Green Bay Press-Gazette, Marshfield News-Herald, Post-Crescent, Poughkeepsie Journal, Stevens Point Journal, March 10, 2013]

[Women and Sunshine Week](#)

[Elmira Star-Gazette, Corpus Christi Caller Times, Manchester Union Leader, Uniontown Herald Standard, Waco Tribune-Herald, San Marcos Daily Record, Kane Republican, Hawaii Tribune-Herald, Wisconsin Dells Events, Hagerstown Herald-Mail, La Prensa San Diego, Canton Repository, Sampson Independent, Orangeburg Times and Democrat, Ft. Myers News-Press, International Falls Daily Journal, Ridgway Record, Franklin Journal, Juneau Empire, Bradford Journal Opinion, Annandale Advocate, Council Bluffs Daily Nonpareil, Crookstone Daily Times, Tri-County News, Southwest News-Herald, Southwest Suburban News-Herald, Morristown Citizen Tribune, Pine City Pioneer, Houma Courier, Thibodaux Daily Comet, Staples World, Caribbean Life, Kokomo Tribune, Tazewell County Free Press, Grant County Herald, Jackson Sun]

[Transparency You Can't Believe In](#)

[New Jersey Today, Floyd County Times, Augusta Free Press, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, Your Houston News, Iowa City Press Citizen]

[Federal Spending: Let the Sunshine In](#)

[The Hill, The Capital Times, Grand Coulee Star, Spring Hope Enterprise, Houma Courier, The Daily Comet, Taunton Daily Gazette, David City Banner-Press]

[What You Don't Know Can Hurt You](#)

[Battle Creek Enquirer, Wicked Local Berkley, Taunton Daily Gazette, Gilmer Mirror, OA, Odessa American, Online, Houston News, Augusta Free Press, Caribbean Life, Cyprus Creek Mirror, The Tennessean, Free News Post]

[Regulators Hiding Data on Foreclosure Practices](#)

[San Francisco Chronicle, Houston News]

[Farm Bill Threatens Our Right to Know](#)

[Battle Creek Enquirer, Biloxi Sun Herald, Buffalo News, Burlington Free Press, Deer Park Broadcaster, Deming Headlight, Elk Daily Free Press, Daily Sun News, Fort Bend News, Kane Republican, Maryville Daily Times, Pasadena Citizen, Salinas Californian, Spring Observer, Sugar Land Sun, Tomball Potpourri, Green Count Record, St. Marys Daily Press, Ridgway Record, Eau Claire Country Today, Crookstone Daily Times, Fargo Forum, Spring Hope Enterprise, Carroll County News, Angola Herald Republican, Marshall Independent, La Follette Press, Stephen Messenger, Kendallville News-Sun, Staples World, Auburn Star, New London Day, Lassen County Times, Pine City Pioneer, Rushford Tri-County Record, Grand Forks Herald, Middletown Press & Journal]