



Press Release

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Report: Continued Expansion of Federal Government Secrecy Seen in 2007

WASHINGTON, Sept. 9, 2008 — Government secrecy increased across a wide spectrum of indicators in 2007, according to a report released today by a coalition of over 70 open government advocates. At the same time, the 110th Congress has moved toward increasing openness and accountability.

The findings of the *2008 Secrecy Report Card*, produced annually by OpenTheGovernment.org to identify trends in public access to government information, include:

- Almost 22 million FOIA requests were received, an increase of nearly 2 percent over last year;
- The 25 departments and agencies that handle the bulk of FOIA requests failed to make a dent in their backlogs, although they received the fewest requests since reporting began in 1998; and
- The number of original classification decisions increased slightly after dropping two consecutive years, and the number of derivative classifications increased by almost 13 percent.

According to Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, “These trends indicate that citizens will have to wait even longer to know what their government is doing.”

The report also cites indicators of growing secrecy, including:

- The government spent \$195 maintaining the secrets already on the books for every one dollar the government spent declassifying documents, a 5 percent increase in one year.
- 18 percent of the requested Department of Defense (DOD) acquisition funding is for classified, or “black,” programs. Classified acquisition funding has more than doubled in real terms since FY 1995.
- \$114.1 billion of federal contract funding was given out without any competition. On average since 2000, fully and openly competed contracts have dropped by almost 25 percent
- Federal surveillance activity under the jurisdiction of the secretive Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court has risen for the 9th consecutive year—more than double the amount in 2000.

“The current administration continues to refuse to be held accountable to the public,” said McDermott. “In recent years, polls have shown that a growing number of Americans believe the federal government is secretive—terrible news for our democracy. Until we restore openness and accountability to the federal government, it will be impossible to win back the public’s trust.”

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OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition transcending party lines of more than 70 consumer and good government groups, librarians, environmentalists, labor, journalists, and others focused on pushing back governmental secrecy and promoting openness.

Read the embargoed report here:

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/SecrecyReportCard08.pdf>

www.openthegovernment.org

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