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Americans for Less Secrecy, More Democracy



Steering Committee 2010

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NEW OPPORTUNITIES, NEW CHALLENGES: 2010 YEAR-END REPORT

Access to information about our government and its activities is part of our American heritage and a fundamental human right. 2010 was a good year for the OpenTheGovernment.org coalition. We grew, we advanced our strategic goals, and we made the federal government more open.

OpenTheGovernment.org — a coalition of consumer and good-government groups, environmentalists, journalists, library associations, labor organizations and others from across the political spectrum — was formed to unite openness advocates in their efforts to combat rapidly increasing government secrecy. Its mission is to make government more transparent in order to achieve accountability, security and an equitable society.

Since its founding in 2003, OpenTheGovernment.org has grown from 30 to more than 70 partner organizations, and more than 200 individuals have signed our Statement of Values affirming their support for open government.

The OpenTheGovernment.org partners believe we can make the federal government a more open place which, in turn, will make us safer, strengthen public trust in government and uphold our democratic principles. But there is a lot of work to be done, and the coming years will continue to provide both new opportunities and new challenges.

A new political landscape emerged with the 2010 elections, with potential new challenges to transparency. OpenTheGovernment.org has recommitted to our strategic goals to ensure that access to information remains a priority for the Administration, lawmakers, and the public.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In January 2010, the Steering Committee of OpenTheGovernment.org (OTG) revised its strategic-operational plan to reflect the new political environment. The Steering Committee reaffirmed the following goals:

www.openthegovernment.org

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- To broaden the base of national, state and local organizations active on right-to-know and anti-secrecy issues
- To advance the right to know what government is doing at the federal and state levels through legislation and other means
- To shine an even brighter spotlight on government secrecy efforts.

With the generous support of our funders and the hard work of our partners, OTG made substantial progress toward achieving its 2010 strategic goals. As 2011 dawns, the coalition continues to play an effective leadership role in government transparency, particularly at the White House and in Congress, where staff members increasingly turn to us for strategic planning and coordination with the openness community.

In only seven years, we have made considerable strides in stimulating legislative action and garnering media attention. While the growth of the coalition itself is one measure of success, OTG is also encouraged by our advances in legislative and executive branch activity promoting transparency, and the extent to which we have expanded media and public engagement in open government.

Additional growth has been seen in indicators such as website traffic, email subscriber lists, participation in our Sunshine Week activities, and the number of advocates who respond to our action alerts by signing onto letters, submitting public comments and calling legislators. OTG coalition partners also have initiated a variety of openness campaigns.

SUCCESS IN MEETING STRATEGIC GOALS

Goal: Advance the right to know at the federal and state levels through legislative and other vehicles. Strengthen coordination and engagement of organizations currently working on right-to-know and anti-secrecy issues.

OTG engages in a variety of campaigns initiated by coalition staff and strategic partners, which regularly intersect. Staff initiatives are executed in coordination with partners within and outside of the coalition, and we frequently are asked by other groups to coordinate activities and identify campaign partners.

Contributors to the success of this project include individual volunteers as well as OTG those from the American Association of Law Libraries (AALA), American Library Association (ALA), Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), OMB Watch, Project On Government Oversight (POGO), Sunlight Foundation, Union of Concerned Scientists, faculty and students at the University of Maryland College of Information Studies, and faculty at the Armstrong Institute for Interactive Media Studies at Miami University of Ohio.

Success: OTG leads in promoting and sustaining transparency and an overall culture of openness in government, particularly in organizing a response to President Obama's [Open Government Directive](#) and in assessing the Administration's progress towards making the federal government more transparent, participatory and collaborative. This includes:

- *Analysis and Recommendations for Data.gov:* OTG conducted an extensive analysis of the high-value datasets posted online by federal agencies, per the Open Government Directive. In a [letter](#) to Chief Information Officer Vivek Kundra, OTG raised concerns about the removal of data without public notice, the format and usability of the datasets, the value of the releases, and the quality of the data. Suggestions for improvement from OTG were among the most popular on EvolvingData.gov, an administration website set up to gather feedback on Data.gov.
- *Participation in Open Government Events:* OTG staff helped promote and were in attendance at the First Annual International Open Government Data Conference, held at the U.S. Commerce Department, which brought together experts in making government data available and useful around the world. To mark the first anniversary of the Open Government Directive, OTG Director Patrice McDermott co-authored with Carolyn Lukensmeyer, founder and president of AmericaSpeaks, a column that was cross-posted, on [Government Executive](#), [NextGov](#), and [Federal News Radio](#). The piece highlights the Directive's successes to date and recommends the next steps for making government more open and participatory. In addition, Dr. McDermott and David Stern of AmericaSpeaks were [interviewed](#) about the anniversary and other open government issues on Federal News Radio's popular "Dorobek Insider" program.
- *Developing Standards for Agencies' Open Government Plans and Progress:* In concert with our partners and others, OTG worked closely with the Administration's Open Government Working Group on developing agency plans to post their access plans, as required in the President's Open Government Directive. Among the suggestions were minimum criteria for agency awards for surpassing the Directive's goals, as well as a detailed "disclosure floor" that lists the information that every agency must, at a minimum, make available to be judged as exceeding the Directive.
- *Auditing Agency Information Policies:* More than a dozen volunteers from partner organizations, academia, and public-interest groups joined OTG in an audit of 30 agencies' information policies, which were mandated in the Directive. The results, released to the public in April 2010 showed that agencies with a historic tendency toward transparency tended to produce stronger plans. In addition to providing each agency with feedback from the audit, OTG offered to re-evaluate any plan updated by the end of June 2010. A second round of audits, which ranked updated agency plans from weakest to strongest, found most agencies made clear progress toward meeting their information requirements. Audit results, follow up reviews and other related materials are posed on OTG's Evaluating Open Government Site (<https://sites.google.com/site/opengovtplans/>).
- *Continued Monitoring of and Participation in Administration Transparency Efforts:* To help ensure information is presented consistently across various agency websites, OTG and members of the transparency community have developed a checklist for this "open government floor" (<http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/OpennessFloor.pdf>) that covers areas such as accountability and influence, spending, records and data, policies, and participation. The OTG coalition also met with Norm Eisen, former Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform, and at his invitation, attended meetings of the Open Government Working Group and sent an open letter to the Administration noting the importance of participation by the transparency community as open government plans are initiated and implemented.

- *Measurement of Transparency Progress:* OTG has moved its efforts from evaluating plans to measuring progress. There are currently three levels of evaluation:
 - The availability of information identified by the nongovernment openness community as critical for accountability, which will be evaluated by OTG volunteers
 - Progress in implementation of the agency's open government plan, as measured first by agency personnel then reviewed by OTG volunteers
 - The usability and technical openness of the agency's website, an appraisal led by faculty from the AIMS at Miami University of Ohio and developed by them in conjunction with the Center for Library and Information Innovation at the University of Maryland.

OTG posted a draft of the proposed framework for public comment (<http://bit.ly/ogov-feedback>), and encouraged comments directly to our partners, who shared the project with their constituents, and on various social networks. Several dozen comments on the framework were received and OTG posted responses to all relevant points (<http://openthegovernment.digress.it/response-to-comments/>). In addition, based on Open Government Working Group feedback, OTG will produce government-wide evaluations on agency progress, highlighting best practices and encouraging their adoption. A streamlined evaluation form was developed in conjunction with the Working Group.

Success: OTG leadership helps ensure the preservation of electronic records, protecting both accountability and history. The OTG coalition has provided leadership, especially regarding legislative and regulatory reforms, for improving electronic records management. After many years of raising the issue of electronic records, the coalition has cultivated ties to allies in the current Administration and at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Examples include:

- *Building Consensus:* At Mr. Eisen's request, OTG helped to identify electronic record-keeping disagreements between privacy and openness communities, and then developed recommendations for consensus, which were shared with Mr. Eisen and his staff.
- *Preserving Electronic Records:* Working with the White House and NARA, OTG has identified several areas of concern and improvement in electronic record keeping and has conducted regular meetings with the Archivist of the U.S., David S. Ferriero, and his staff on the issue. Also:
 - In response to criticism from OTG and our partners about NARA's failure to hold agencies accountable for electronic record keeping, NARA now requires agencies to complete Records Management Self-Assessments, which are shared with OTG staff and our partners. Regular briefings by NARA staff cover the results of the assessment and plans for future self-assessments and audits.
 - NARA staff also regularly updates coalition staff and our partners on the status of the Electronic Records Archive (ERA). OTG, in conjunction with CREW, circulated a [letter to the archivist](#) strongly encouraging NARA to provide maximum electronic access to vital records in the ERA. OTG coalition staff and some partners were invited to beta test NARA's Online Public Access module, which does not provide access to ERA, but does provide access to other information held by NARA. Access to ERA records is planned for 2011.

- In Congress, OpenTheGovernment.org worked in conjunction with Hill staff on and circulated a letter in support of H.R. 1387, the Electronic Message Preservation Act, which directs the Archivist to establish standards for the capture, management, and preservation of White House and agency emails, as well as certification standards for any electronic records management systems implemented at agencies. While OTG would prefer that Congress pass a bill that requires agencies to implement records management systems consistent with modern technology, we believe H.R. 1387 demonstrated concern about this serious issue, and took a first step to ensure that these vital records are preserved for the public. The coalition was joined by 22 organizations, including several coalition partners, on the final [letter](#) to the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. Unfortunately, the 111th Congress ended without the Senate acting on the bill. Coalition staff will work with Hill staff on the bill during the 112th Congress.

Success: OTG raises visibility of destruction of federal records and presses for accountability, particularly at the Justice Department and CIA.

- Justice Department:* When it became apparent from reports by investigators in the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) that many of the official email communications of former Deputy Assistant Attorney General John Yoo had been destroyed, OTG communicated with NARA and with the relevant congressional committees. OpenTheGovernment.org and 45 organizations concerned with transparency and accountability sent a [letter](#) to the Senate and House Information Policy Subcommittees urging hearings to determine how the emails could be missing or destroyed, despite the requirements of the Federal Records Act (FRA). While the subcommittees did not hold hearings on the issue, Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), who was copied on the letter, asked Acting Deputy Attorney General Gary Grindler about the missing emails at a hearing on the OPR report.
- Central Intelligence Agency:* In December, OTG organized a [letter](#) and [petition](#) thanking NARA for not giving the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) a "free pass" for the illegal destruction of videotapes showing the torture of detainees at CIA black sites. The letter and petition express profound disappointment that the Department of Justice (DOJ) had declined to bring criminal charges over what appears to be a blatant violation of the Federal Records Act and destruction of evidence. The communications also expressed the hope that DOJ will fully support NARA's investigation into the missing records and act on its conclusions. OTG staff has followed up with the Archivist and his staff, and we understand NARA will continue to work to hold the CIA to account for its actions.

Success: OTG ensures that FOIA reform continues apace across the Administration

The OTG coalition continues to talk with high-ranking Administration officials about the lack of progress on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) improvements. The lack of progress on FOIA reform has been a central issue at many of these meetings, and the coalition has discussed potential policy levers to promote pro-active disclosures at the agencies. In addition to OTG letters and meetings on a variety of issues, specific examples include:

- *FOI on the Dashboard*: OTG and several coalition partners urged inclusion of an agency FOIA component in the White House's Open Government Dashboard, noting in a letter that including information about FOIA performance would send a signal to agencies that they will be held accountable for reducing FOIA backlogs and operating with a presumption of disclosure. A follow-up letter reiterated the dashboard idea and presented [specific recommendations](#) for improving FOIA processing and agency compliance with the Attorney General's 2009 FOIA guidance. Although the Administration did not include FOIA in the White House Dashboard, DOJ previewed its dashboard for OTG staff and partners in August. When the dashboard launches on www.foia.gov, it will include data from 2008, 2009 and 2010 agency FOIA reports. The coalition and our partners will continue to work with DOJ to make sure the dashboard meets the openness standards of the transparency community and the public.
- *Support of and Connections with OGIS*: OpenTheGovernment.org has served a central role in facilitating discussion and work with the new Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), which is tasked with mediating disputes between FOIA requesters and federal agencies, reviewing policies and procedures of administrative agencies under FOIA, reviewing agency compliance with FOIA, and recommending policy changes to the Congress and president to improve the administration of FOIA. OTG staff, several of our partners and other openness advocates meet regularly with OGIS staff, and we maintain a listserv that connects us. The OTG coalition will continue to work with OGIS to make sure it has sufficient resources and other support needed to do its job.
- *On the Hill*: OpenTheGovernment.org continues to work alongside our partners and allies on the Hill to fight back against (b)(3) FOIA exemptions created by other statutes. These exemptions often are tucked into unrelated legislation. Our efforts on this front in the 11th Congress included:

 - OpenTheGovernment.org was successful in stopping a (b)(3) provision of the Intelligence Committee reauthorization bill that would have exempted terrorist identity information (TII) from FOIA. OTG coordinated a [letter](#) signed by more than 40 organizations urging the Intelligence Committee chairs and ranking members to omit the TII exemption. OTG and our partners were successful in keeping the provision out of the Senate version, but it was included in the House bill. Conferees agreed to remove the TII (b)(3) exemption from the final bill, but our work is not over. A similar provision may be tucked into future Intelligence appropriations bills.
 - OpenTheGovernment.org worked closely with congressional staff to remove several (b)(3) exemptions in the Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act (Dodd-Frank Act), and brought congressional staff together with several organizations that work on whistleblower issues to ensure that efforts to protect confidentiality and privacy did not result in new FOIA exemptions. Coalition partners also played a central role in drafting and passing legislation to repeal (b)(3) exemptions granted to the SEC by Dodd-Frank, which could have severely hindered the public's ability to gain access to critical information related to the SEC's oversight activities.
 - OpenTheGovernment.org was joined by many of our partners in [letter to Sen. Leahy](#), chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, expressing concerns

about Section 301 of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act, S. 3302, that would have authorized the Secretary of Transportation to establish categories of information that are exempt from public disclosure under FOIA. S. 3302 was not brought to a vote in the Senate before the end of the 111th Congress.

- The OTG coalition worked with our partners to organize and send a [letter](#) urging the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to not include in the final version of the National Transportation Safety Board Reauthorization (NTSB) Act of 2010 (HR 4714, S 2768) provisions in the Senate version of the bill that would have unduly limited the public's ability to access critical information. NTSB sought the exemptions to relieve itself of the burden of processing requests. Our letter noted that exempting categories of information from FOIA is not an appropriate way to handle resource issues, and is not in the spirit of the law. A conferenced version of the measure was not voted on by the end of the 111th Congress.
- OpenTheGovernment.org saw great success organizing support for the Congressionally Mandated Reports Act (HR 6026). The legislation would create a centralized government website hosting electronic versions of all reports releasable under FOIA that Congress requires from executive branch entities. Prior to a mark-up of the bill, OTG circulated a [letter](#) in support of the measure. Ultimately, the bill was not brought to the House floor for a vote, but the coalition will work with Hill staff on the legislation in the new Congress.
- OpenTheGovernment.org and several partners sent a [letter](#) to Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA), chair of the Homeland Security Committee Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment. The letter supported Rep. Harman's amendment to the 2010 Intelligence Authorization bill requiring the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to prepare a report on over-classification. The report would be a first step toward curbing unnecessary and unwarranted secrecy that hinders information sharing, causes information to be inappropriately removed from public access, and causes the government to needlessly spend billions of taxpayer dollars protecting information that should never have been classified. The amendment was accepted, and the provision was included in the bill signed into law in October.
- OpenTheGovernment.org advised Hill staff on HR 553, the Reducing Over-classification Act, which became law in October.
- OTG joined several coalition partners on a [letter](#) penned by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) urging the Senate to support S 446, a bipartisan bill to permit broadcast television coverage of Supreme Court proceedings. The bill died at the end of the 111th Congress, but the coalition will support a bill if it is re-introduced.
- With several partners, OTG joined a [letter](#) urging Congress to pass the bipartisan Whistleblower Protection Act during the lame duck session, and

joined a [letter](#) urging Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) to not delay passage of the bill. The bill passed the House unanimously, but, unfortunately, a last minute secret hold stopped the bill from final passage.

- *Friends of the Court:* OTG joined several coalition partners on an [amicus brief](#) filed by Public Citizen arguing against the implementation of a so-called "high 2" FOIA exemption that applies when a "personnel document" is "predominantly internal and its disclosure presents a risk of circumvention of agency regulation." Oral argument was heard by the Supreme Court on Dec. 1, and a ruling is expected before the summer. OTG also played a leading role in coordinating response to the Supreme Court decision to review *FCC v. AT&T*. OpenTheGovernment.org and several coalition partners signed on to an [amicus brief](#) written by counsel from CREW and the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) arguing that FOIA exemption 7(c) does not afford any protection for so-called "privacy" interests of corporations. Applying this privacy protection to corporations would bar public access to documents long understood to be available under FOIA and would afford corporate entities more privacy protections than individuals.
- *Knocking Down Roadblocks:* OpenTheGovernment.org and Public Citizen in 2011 will issue a report on the findings from their survey of FOIA requesters and the troubling pattern of disclosure obstacles at agencies. These include: refusals to search for documents before requesters agree to pay search costs, even when the requester is likely to receive a fee waiver; requesters' difficulties receiving fee waivers; exorbitant search cost estimates; attempts to pressure requesters to narrow or modify their requests; agency responses that a "preliminary" response will be deemed "final" unless the requester affirmatively requests reconsideration; and agencies' efforts to elicit agreements that a requester will not appeal a partial disclosure if it is promptly made. OTG and Public Citizen are working to identify which agencies are using these tactics, how frequently they are using them, and whether they are using additional tactics to stall or derail disclosure.

Success: OTG helps the Obama Administration chart a course toward openness in new rules on secrecy and ensures other government activity is conducted in the sunlight.

- *Containing CUI:* On Nov. 4, the Obama Administration released a new Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) policy rescinding the Bush Administration's Executive Order and standardizing and limiting the use of control markings on unclassified information. As the policy was being developed the OTG coalition worked with Administration officials, transparency advocates and congressional allies to move the policy away from creating a fourth level of classification, and instead standardizing and limiting the use of CUI. The day the policy was released, OTG released a [statement](#) lauding the new policy as "an enormous victory for openness." As the policy is implemented, OTG will continue to monitor activity.
- *Explaining WikiLeaks:* As the WikiLeaks situation heated up, OpenTheGovernment.org gathered our transparency partners to discuss the issues raised and to find areas of agreement. Working with our partners, OTG launched a [Frequently Asked WikiLeaks Questions page](#) on its website and maintains an invitation-only Google group to facilitate communication between partners. OTG Director McDermott attended the ALA Midwinter Meeting in San Diego to discuss WikiLeaks with ALA membership. The coalition also joined a broad range of advocacy organizations on an [open letter to U.S. government officials](#),

organized by EFF, calling for freedom of expression to be respected in the WikiLeaks debate.

- *Praise for Openness in Nuclear Policy:* OpenTheGovernment.org organized a [letter](#) in May to Secretary of Defense Gates from more than a dozen public interest organizations and professional societies thanking him for promoting increased transparency in nuclear weapons policy. The letter pointed out that the Secretary's decision to publish the Nuclear Posture Review Report in an entirely unclassified format and the disclosure of the size of the U.S. nuclear stockpile may not resolve the continuing debate over the future of nuclear weapons policy, but it will enable it to proceed on a more informed basis.
- *Seeking Disaster Information:* The OTG coalition worked to promote transparency in the aftermath of both the BP Oil disaster and the Massey mines tragedy.
 - As the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico worsened, OpenTheGovernment.org organized a [letter](#) to President Obama in late May urging him to give the public access to all monitoring data related to the oil leak in the interest of meeting the his commitment to "disclose information rapidly in forms that the public can readily find and use." The OTG coalition and some of our partners met with local organizations from the affected area.
 - OTG Director McDermott attended the Civil Society Forum on Transparency in the U.S. Minerals Management Service Reform. OTG has taken a strong stand on, and will continue to press for, the importance of transparency to continued health and safety in the mining industry and others.
- *Reform State Secrets:* The OTG coalition continues to play a role in the campaign to reform the state secrets privilege by bringing together those concerned about the invocation of national security to justify secrecy and the abuse of civil rights. In addition to scheduling and hosting calls and meetings to discuss legislative strategies and developments in the courts, OTG created and maintained a [Google group](#) to facilitate the flow of information between organizations working on the issue. OTG staff accompanied our partners to meetings on the Hill to educate staff on the issue, although the 111th Congress ended without acting on the issue.

Goal: Broaden the base of national, state and local organizations that are active on right to know and anti-secrecy issues.

Success: OpenTheGovernment.org was extremely active in 2010 in outreach and coordination with new and established partners around the country dedicated to government transparency.

- *Joining other Groups:* Among its activities, the coalition joined the No Free Lunch Caucus, a group of organizations that come together to discuss how organizations can combine efforts to improve government accountability. OTG staff also attended the National Freedom of Information Coalition annual meeting in Arlington, VA. NFOIC is the parent organization of state FOI coalitions around the country.
- *Attending Conferences:* OTG Director McDermott attended several forums and symposia on government transparency during 2010, including:
 - "[Open Government: Defining, Designing, and Sustaining Transparency](#)," a two-day workshop sponsored by Princeton University's Center for Information

Technology Policy, where she participated in a panel discussion on the meaning of transparency, particularly by utilizing technology to disseminate government data in innovative ways.

- “Privacy, Freedom of Information, Transparency, Accountability, and the Public Record,” a panel discussion she moderated during at the Joint Annual Meeting of the Council of State Archivists, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and the Society of American Archivists.
 - A conference on environmental information, hosted by OMB Watch, where the public interest organizations at the conference agreed to continue to develop related policy recommendations and work for their implementation.
 - A meeting of ARMA-MD in December, where she discussed the state of electronic record preservation and management in the federal government and the implications for history and accountability.
- *Newsletter Updates:* OpenTheGovernment.org continually supports the work of its coalition members by featuring updates from two or more partners in each edition of the OTG newsletter.
 - *Circulating Sign-ons:* OTG regularly circulates letters of our coalition partners and other organizations with which we regularly work, including: The Bank Information Center; The Center for Democracy and Technology; The Project on Government Oversight; The Sunlight Foundation; and The Union of Concerned Scientists.
 - *New Technology, Better Contacts:* OpenTheGovernment.org migrated its grassroots communication and advocacy content to a new technology provider, Democracy in Action. During the migration, old contact information was updated and non-functioning email addresses were purged. Some 1,751 email addresses were entered into the system and more than 100 new email contacts were added to the list in just four months. The coalition used its new online organizing technology to engage individual members in the campaign to support NARA's decision to call on the CIA to account for the illegal destruction of videotapes showing the torture of detainees at CIA black sites. More than 125 individuals [signed the petition](#), including several people who had never previously participated in one of our “Action Alerts” or been a part of our advocacy list.
 - *Preparing for a New Congress:* In the wake of the 2010 elections, OTG arranged a meeting for our partners to discuss an agenda and strategies for the 112th Congress. We will soon host another meeting to further refine the agenda and strategies given the make-up of congressional committees and determine which organizations will lead particular efforts.

We continue to look for ways to expand our base, given the federal focus of the coalition and the resources of the staff.

Goal: Raise awareness of openness and secrecy efforts.

Success: In March, OTG put on its [2010 Sunshine Week Webcast](#) at the Center for American Progress (CAP).

In addition to the sizable live audience at CAP in Washington, DC, the event was broadcast at almost a dozen local events throughout the country and was featured on a CAP webcast. C-

Span was on hand to record the event, which was later available on its website and the CAP and OTG sites. More than 500 people have watched the archived version on the OTG site alone.

- The first panel was Norm Eisen, Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform; Jim Harper, Director of Information Policy Studies at the Cato Institute; and John Wonderlich, Policy Director at the Sunlight Foundation. The discussion focused on the White House's efforts to embed transparency in the system by requiring each agency to develop an open government plan and post open government pages.
- The second group of panelists — Kevin Goldberg, American Society of News Editors (ASNE) Counsel; OGIS Director Miriam Nisbet; Melanie Sloan, CREW Executive Director; and Melanie Pustay, Director of the OIP at the Justice Department — discussed how changes to law and policy affect the public's ability to request and receive information from the federal government.
- The last panel featured a developer and an advocate explaining how they use government information like that on Data.gov to make a difference for the public. Panelists were Laura Beavers, National [KIDS COUNT](#) Coordinator for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Eric Gundersen, President and Co-founder of Development Seed. The panel was moderated by Sean Moulton, Director of Federal Information Policy at OMB Watch.

Success: In September, the coalition released the [2010 Secrecy Report Card](#), a quantitative annual report on indicators of government secrecy.

The report chronicles a continued decrease in most indicators of secrecy since the end of the Bush Administration and growing backlogs in the declassification system as old secrets move through the system.

- The Secrecy Report Card received extensive media coverage by the AP and several publications, including The Washington Post, Top Secret America, NextGov (also appearing in National Journal Online), Federal Times, TPM Muckraker, and ProPublica. The report was also mentioned in local and regional editorials around the country, and OTG Director McDermott was interviewed on Federal News Radio. Several coalition partners increased coverage of the report by blogging about it and circulating it among their lists.

Success: OTG was featured in several news media outlets, including:

- OTG Director McDermott authored articles in [Government Information Quarterly](#), [Research in Social Problems and Public Policy](#), and the [Oregon Library Association Quarterly](#).
- She appeared on "[Whistle Where You Work](#)," a multi-media program produced by coalition partner the Government Accountability Project (GAP) to discuss progress and lingering issues with FOIA under the Obama Administration.
- News Channel 8 and several radio stations interviewed staff about the Open Government Plans audit.

OpenTheGovernment.org continues to put out the bi-weekly [Updates](#), and staff serves as a resource to journalists on a regular basis as the coalition has strengthened its relationship with reporters.

Success: OpenTheGovernment.org website continues to evolve and become more user friendly.

Coalition staff have shared and discussed a modified information architecture and rough wire-frame with a web designer. The ideas for the new website design and architecture were developed with our Steering Committee and the assistance of a volunteer with expertise in knowledge management.

Some trial content has been moved to the new site. The new site will be more informative, usable, and lively. It will also better feature our coalition partners, and their work to advance open government.

UNIQUE VISITORS TO OPENTHEGOVERNMENT.ORG, 2010			
Month	Unique Visitors	Month	Unique Visitors
January	4,028	July	3,329
February	4,178	August	3,203
March	5,747	September	4,636
April	4,192	October	3,370
May	4,056	November	3,475
June	3,240	December	3,807
TOTAL			47,261

The staff of OpenTheGovernment.org continues to pursue opportunities to work with new media to educate them on openness and secrecy and to learn how to convey our message to and through them.