

OPENTHEGOVERNMENT.ORG

Americans for Less Secrecy, More Democracy



Steering Committee

Steven Aftergood
*Federation of
American Scientists*

Bill Allison
Sunlight Foundation

Mary Alice Baish
*American Association
of Law Libraries*

Gary Bass*
OMB Watch

Tom Blanton*
*National Security
Archive*

Danielle Brian
*Project on Government
Oversight*

Lucy Dalglish
*Reporters Committee
for Freedom of the
Press*

Charles Davis
*National Freedom of
Information Coalition*

Leslie Harris
*Center for Democracy
& Technology*

Robert Leger
*Society of Professional
Journalists*

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

Michael Ostrolenk
Liberty Coalition

Reece Rushing
*Center for
American Progress*

Peg Seminario
AFL-CIO

David Sobel
*Electronic Frontier
Foundation*

*co-chairs

Patrice McDermott
Director

Amy Bennett
Program Associate

2009 YEAR-END REPORT

OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition of consumer and good government groups, environmentalists, journalists, library groups, labor and others united to make the federal government a more open place in order to make us safer, strengthen public trust in government, and support our democratic principles. Our coalition transcends partisan lines and includes progressives, libertarians, and conservatives.

OpenTheGovernment.org (OTG) was formed in 2003 because government secrecy was on the rise and out of control and openness advocates were working in stovepipes and sometimes in contradiction. We needed to get our act together. And through the work of the coalition, we have done so. In the seven years since, we have grown from 30 partner organizations to more than 70, and over 200 individuals who have signed our Statement of Values.

The mission of OpenTheGovernment.org is to make government more open to achieve accountability, security, and an equitable society.

The partners in OpenTheGovernment.org believe that access to information, especially about our government and its activities, is part of our common heritage as Americans and is a human right. It is a right and heritage that we believe can be expanded and strengthened in the coming years.

Goals and Objectives

In January 2007, the Steering Committee of OpenTheGovernment.org met to develop a strategic-operational plan for the next three years to meet our mission and achieve our goals.

- o Broadening the base of national, state and local organizations active on right to know and anti-secrecy issues.

www.openthegovernment.org

OpenTheGovernment.org, 1742 Connecticut Avenue N.W., 3rd Floor, Washington D.C. 20009
202-332-OPEN (6736)

A project of the Fund for Constitutional Government

All donations are tax-deductible to the maximum allowable by law.

- o Advancing the right-to-know at the federal and state levels through legislative and other vehicles.
- o Better publicizing secrecy efforts.

We have revisited our strategic-operational goals to reflect the opportunities and challenges of the new political environment and will soon release a Strategic Plan for 2010 - 2012.

The coalition continues to play a strong, united, effective, and sustainable leadership role. Increasingly, the White House and congressional staff reach out to us for our ideas and for coordination with and outreach to openness advocates.

Thanks to the generous support of our funders and hard work of our partners, OpenTheGovernment.org made substantial progress in 2009 toward achieving our strategic goals.

We have worked on four fronts to accomplish these goals:

- o Policy work: legislative, executive branch/regulatory, judicial;
- o Engaging the public through outreach and action with national, state and local organizations, or with the public more directly;
- o Raising the visibility of a secrecy/openness message with legislators through work with Congress; with funders; with the media; and through our website, and coordination with our partners; and
- o Conducting research: analysis & reports – on developing and ongoing issues, to be shared with our partners and others;

In six short years, OTG has already made considerable strides on all accounts, including stimulating legislative action and media attention. The strength of the coalition itself is a proxy for success. We measure our success by the degree to which we are able to advance the right-to-know and push back secrecy both legislatively and in the Executive Branch; and the extent to which we expand media and public awareness of and interest in issues concerning public access to information.

We also track such indicators as website traffic; growth in email subscriber lists; participation in Sunshine Week activities; and the number of advocates who respond to our action alerts (e.g., by signing onto letters, submitting public comments, calling legislators) and engagement of partners in a variety of campaigns initiated not specifically by OpenTheGovernment.org staff but by other partners themselves.

ADVANCING THE RIGHT-TO-KNOW

Policy Work – Executive Branch

Open Government Directive

OpenTheGovernment.org and our coalition partners built on the work we had done with the Obama transition and seized the opportunity to work with an Administration that

makes government transparency a top priority. As noted in our 2008 report, we had presented the transition team with several concrete policy proposals to increase openness and accountability and consistently advocated for the President to take leadership on these issues.

On his first full day in Office, President Obama issued the “Memorandum on Openness and Transparency” charging the executive branch with creating the Open Government Directive (OGD), recommendations to make the federal government transparent, collaborative and participatory. OTG worked extensively to coordinate our coalition partners to help the new Administration develop the Directive.

Our work on the Directive – both with the Administration and in our community -- has led to new openings for achieving components of our agenda, including promoting executive branch openness and accountability, ensuring government information is findable, accessible and usable on and across government websites, and that federal agencies provide government information (documents, data, etc.) in open, structured, machine-readable formats that will permit the public – nonprofits, companies, individuals – and other government entities to grab the information, reuse it, and combine it with other information, and promoting electronic records management and preservation.

The OTG Director and Program Associate attended two conferences (“Transparency Camp” and “Gov 2.0 Camp”) early in 2009 to meet and discuss digital transparency ideas and issues with both individuals focused on the new technologies and government officials and contractors trying to figure out how to use social media to provide access to government and government information. This outreach contributes both to educating those new to the open government information field and to expanding the awareness and influence of the coalition among government officials and the contractors working in this area.

In February, OTG helped coordinate a meeting with a member of the team from the General Services Administration (GSA) charged with drawing up a blueprint to implement President Obama’s OGD. Over 20 representatives from open government organizations attended the meeting. OTG’s Director also offered a presentation on the OGD at a staff briefing for our coalition partner, the Government Accountability Project, on February 23rd.

OpenTheGovernment.org hosted the 4th Annual Sunshine Week National Dialogue, “[Opening Doors: Finding the Keys to Open Government](http://openingdoors.openthegovernment.org/),”¹ on March 20th, at the Center for American Progress. The webcast panel discussion featured Vivek Kundra, newly-appointed federal Chief Information Officer (CIO); Katherine McFate, a Program Officer for Government Performance and Accountability in the Ford Foundation's Governance Unit; Beth Noveck, deputy chief technology officer for open government and leader for President Obama's Open Government Initiative; and Dan Chenok, a member of President Obama's "Technology, Innovation and Government Reform" transition team, former branch chief for information policy and technology in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and currently senior vice president and general manager of Pragmatics. During the webcast, panelists answered questions from the live audience and local sites across the country. To continue the discussion after the event, OTG set up the

¹ <http://openingdoors.openthegovernment.org/>

[OpenGovernmentDirective Google group](#). This group continues to grow and serve as a venue for discussion of the Directive issued on December 8, 2009.

As part of the coalition's Sunshine Week event, OTG, along with our coalition partner, OMB Watch, kicked off the national dialogue on the OGD by hosting a meeting attended by public interest representatives and open government experts and government personnel working on the OGD.

OTG Director, Patrice McDermott, participated, as the only non-government panelist, in a panel on *Key Issues of Transparency and Open Government* at the April 2009 Interagency Resources Management Conference (IRMCO).

Prior to the administration's launch of a process for soliciting public input and participation in the development of Open Government Directive, we worked with our coalition partner OMB Watch to organize a [letter](#)² calling on the Administration to open the process to public input. Many aspects of the announced process accorded with the requests in the letter. Over 60 organizations and advocates concerned with government transparency signed on to the letter. Coalition partners actively participated in the public input process.

We continue to cultivate a strong working relationship with Administration officials, offering them feedback on various policies, and began regular meetings on the implementation of Open Government Directive governmentwide to ensure the President's goal of embedding openness and transparency and changing the culture of the federal government.

Making FOIA work/work better

Due the work of OTG's partners and others working in concert, we have been able to ensure the Administration's openness initiatives contain strong support for the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The President's January 21st Memorandum on the Freedom of Information Act contained language that closely tracked transition documents OTG partners and others had sent during the transition. Similarly, the Attorney General's March 19th FOIA memorandum included most of the items our community had sought.

The Open Government Directive contains strong mandates to the agencies to proactively disclose information and to reduce their backlogs of requests to which they have not yet responded. We continued to pressure the Administration on the slow implementation in the agencies of many of the requirements of the OPEN Government Act, which was signed into law on 31 December 2007.

With our partner, the National Security Archive, we organized a [letter](#)³ to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) requesting they consider revising a report released in December 2008 regarding personnel policies for FOIA professionals in light of the new Administration's commitment to transparency and change in FOIA policies. OPM sent an unsatisfactory response; groups continue to work with the Administration on this issue.

² <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/OGD-OpenProcess-FINAL.pdf>

³ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/OPM%20Report%20letter-Final.pdf>

We have also worked together to push back on the Administration where its actions have not matched its rhetoric. An initial section of our 2009 Secrecy Report Card⁴ provided a qualitative overview of promising policies and, in some instances, discouraging practice in the first six months of the Obama administration, with a particular focus on FOIA concerns. This administration, like others, wants to keep the work of the White House confidential and, so, OTG organized a [letter](#),⁵ written by the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) and Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) asking the Obama Administration to treat the White House's Office of Administration (OA) as an agency subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in the interest of transparency and accountability. We have not been successful in convincing them, so far.

Along with our partners, the National Security Archive, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) and Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), OTG has initiated a series of meeting with the Department of Justice to discuss both concerns with FOIA litigation and also enhancing the implementation of FOIA through the OGD.

OTG has served a central role in facilitating discussion and work with the new Office of Government Information Services. The coalition staff, several of our coalition partners, and others meet regularly with OGIS staff, and we maintain a listserv that allows our community and OGIS staff to keep each other apprised of issues. This office was created by the OPEN Government Act of 2007, but only became operational in September 2009.

Although President Obama revoked the Bush executive order on presidential records, access to those records is still accomplished through the Freedom of Information Act. A request for input (RFI) on alternative models for Presidential libraries from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) sent to OTG and a few others for comment included a proposal to process records “systematically” rather than in response to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. This meant that presidential library staff would, we feared, first process easy records and those that did not provide information about policies (especially controversial policies).

OTG was joined by 16 openness and good government advocates, including several coalition partners, on a [letter](#)⁶ asking NARA to take full account of the effect any alternative model may have on the public's ability to gain access to important historical documents and on NARA's obligation to provide the public with timely access to important historical documents. We shared the letter with staff on the relevant committees in Congress. We also met with Presidential Library staff and NARA's General Counsel to discuss our concerns. The strong response from OpenTheGovernment.org and our coalition partners helped to keep the harmful proposal out of NARA's subsequent report to Congress.

Electronic records management

In January, OpenTheGovernment.org submitted [Managing the Public's Records for Accountability and History](#),⁷ a report based on the efforts of a panel of current and former high-level government employees and experts from the non-profit and archival

⁴ http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/SecrecyRC_2009.pdf

⁵ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/OfficeAdmin-FOIA.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/NARA-RFI-PresLibraries-FINAL.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/Managing%20The%20Public%27s%20Records%20.pdf>

communities to the Obama Administration transition team and staff for key legislative committees. We also brought this topic up in meetings with White House staff. The Obama Administration included language about electronic records management in its December 08, 2009 Open Government Directive and has begun to talk seriously about implementing governmentwide records management.

Presidential records

The documents that our coalition submitted to the transition had specific recommendations on presidential records. On President Obama's first full day in office, he rescinded the Bush Executive Order on presidential records and replaced it with [Executive Order 13489—Presidential Records](#). Subsequently, the White House has undertaken several initiatives to ensure that new media records (blogs, Facebook, YouTube communications) are managed as presidential records. We have commented on these initiatives to them and in the media. The White House also settled the suits brought by our partners, the National Security Archive and Citizens for Ethics and Responsibility in Washington (CREW), related to the missing White House e-mail from the Bush Administration.

Limiting Security Restrictions on Information

Our [Secrecy Report Card](#)⁸, released on September 9, provided quantitative data and analysis about a number of secrecy fetishes, such as secrecy orders on new patents, and the DoD's black acquisitions budgets. Up until recently, the total amount of America's military and civilian intelligence budget was also such a fetish. Particularly due to the relentless pressure of OTG steering committee member, Steve Aftergood, on September 15, 2009, the US Director of National Intelligence, Admiral Dennis Blair, revealed the total amount (\$75 billion).

Executive Order on National Security Classification

On May 27, President Obama issued a memo directing his Administration to conduct a review of classified information policies. Coalition partners actively participated in an input process related to a planned executive order on national security classification. The process was initiated by the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) and the input was considered in drafting the new Order. While the Public Interest Declassification Board (PIDB) conducted an open discussion in beginning the process of drafting the new executive order, after that initial phase the process went into the usual "black box," with no further information coming from the government. OpenTheGovernment.org, several coalition partners, and other open government advocates, sent a [letter](#) to the National Security Advisor asking that the public be given the opportunity to comment on the exact revision language of the Executive Order on classification prior its presentation to the President for final consideration. Our request was denied. A September 2nd letter from General Jones states that they "believe it is essential to preserve the confidentiality of the President's deliberative process regarding these complex issues that stem from the President's constitutional authority to protect the national security." Several OTG partners did have an opportunity to play a role in its final wording once it was received by the White House. The order was released on 29 December.

⁸ http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/SecrecyRC_2009.pdf

Sensitive But Unclassified (SBU)/Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI)

OTG and representatives of several coalition partners representing the public interest met with the Interagency Task Force on CUI created by a May 27, 2009 memorandum from President Obama calling for a review of both classification policy and CUI procedures. The CUI Task Force was charged with preparing recommendation for the President within 90 days. The recommendations were issued in December 2009. OTG organized a meeting with the White House on the report and our concerns with some of the recommendations.

Secrecy in the Financial Bailout

OTG launched BailoutWatch.net as part of the Bailout Watch project, a joint project intended to provide the public with analysis and commentary on the financial bailout. The site is an expanded version of the coalition's [financial bailout secrecy clearinghouse](#) where users could find out about the latest actions by OTG and our partners to highlight the issue, link to relevant resources—including government reports, and track the latest news, including by RSS feed. OTG additionally provided a news-and-events aggregation service for subscribed organizations.

Whistleblowers

Our coalition considers whistleblower protection a critical component of open government. We work closely with and follow the leadership of the Government Accountability Project (GAP), the Project on Government Oversight (POGO) and others to promote the rights of government whistleblowers. To this end, OTG joined several coalition partners in sending letters⁹ to President Obama urging him to fulfill his campaign and transition policy commitments to strengthen whistleblower rights to effectively fight waste, fraud and abuse in unprecedented government spending, and arguing whistleblower protections for federal employees are rightfully attached to the economic stimulus package passed by the House and should be included in the final bill sent to the President's desk.

Raising the visibility of a secrecy/openness message with legislators through work with congress

OTG's Director [testified](#)¹⁰ before the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security, at a hearing titled "[National Archives Oversight: Protecting Our Nation's History for Future Generations.](#)"

In September, OpenTheGovernment.org organized a [letter](#) from over 80 organizations and individuals to thank Senator Patrick Leahy for his tireless commitment to protecting and advancing government transparency through the FOIA.

⁹<http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/Letter%20to%20President%20on%20Whistleblower%20Protections.pdf> and

<http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/Whistleblower%20Group%20Press%20Statement-WaPo%20Response.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/NARA-NHPRC-oversight-testimony.pdf>

FOIA

On the legislative side, OTG partners and others continued to fight new exemptions “by other statute,” also known as (b)(3) exemptions. We frequently discuss these exemptions with congressional staff, and help to coordinate a response from the advocacy community. After learning of a provision in the 2010 Intelligence Reauthorization Act (H.R. 2701/S.1494) that would exempt “terrorist identity information (TII)” from the Freedom of Information Act, we helped to organize and send letters to the [House](#)¹¹ and [Senate](#)¹² Intelligence Committees to urge they strike the provision because it is unnecessary, overbroad and unwise. The Senate bill does not include a FOIA exemption for TII. We continue to monitor this issue.

We were contacted by congressional staff about legislation supported by the White House, S. 1100, intended to block release of detainee abuse photos that had recently been ordered to be released pursuant to FOIA by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit. We opposed the bill and, seeing no way to stop the bill, Senator Leahy managed to mitigate its provisions and to secure passage of the Open FOIA Act, which requires that new statutory exemptions to the FOIA specifically cite it. It also requires much greater specificity in the exemptions. This makes it easier for congressional staff and outside openness advocates to find and fight these provisions. This bill had been strongly advocated for by our community for a number of years.

Promoting Congressional Transparency

The coalition, its partners, and others worked with limited success in 2009 to get Congress to make its processes and information more open and accountable. OTG worked with our partner Sunlight Foundation to urge the House of Representatives to post all spending bills online in a searchable, machine-readable format at least 72 hours prior to the scheduled vote on the bill, and to urge the House of Representatives to amend the Rules of the House of Representatives to require that legislation and conference reports be available on the Internet for 72 hours before consideration by the House.

Working with the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT), we organized a [letter](#)¹³ asking the Senate Rules Committee to hold public hearings on open government issues and to mark-up and pass S.R. 118, a resolution that would improve public access to reports by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). Over 40 open government advocates signed onto the letter. We continue to struggle with CRS leadership and some Members on this issue.

¹¹ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/%28b%29%283%29letter-House.pdf>

¹² <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/%28b%29%283%29letter-Senate.pdf>

¹³ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/CRS%20Letter%202009-FINAL>

**BROADENING THE BASE OF NATIONAL, STATE AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS
ACTIVE ON RIGHT TO KNOW AND ANTI-SECRECY ISSUES**

Raising the visibility of secrecy/openness issues with funders and broaden involvement of philanthropy in secrecy issues

We organized a funders' briefing on advancing the public's right to know in the new Administration -- *Openness or Secrecy in Government: What Now?* -- on October 28 in New York City. Co-hosts for this briefing included the Bauman Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of NY, Ford Foundation, Open Society Institute, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and Stewart R Mott Charitable Trust. Speakers included Katherine McFate (Ford Foundation); Sarah Cohen, a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for investigative reporting and recipient of other national award; Danielle Brian, Executive Director of the Project On Government Oversight (POGO); Maya Wiley, the founder and Director of the Center for Social Inclusion; and Gary Bass, the founder and Executive Director of OMB Watch, and co-chair (with Tom Blanton, Executive Director, National Security Archive) of the OpenTheGovernment.org coalition. They spoke on: why government information is so important, yet so difficult to get; how government information is necessary to expose corruption, fraud, and abuse of power; why government transparency is essential to achieving equity; and the Obama administration's openness agenda and challenges facing the nonprofit community.

Twenty-nine representatives of funders registered for the event. A directory of OTG coalition partners (that requested to be included) was provided to all participants.

OTG Director, Patrice McDermott, joined funders, journalists, government workers, and representatives of non-governmental organizations from 18 countries in the Americas at the [Americas Regional Conference on the Right of Access to Information](#). During the conference, which was organized by the Carter Center, with collaboration by the Organization of American States, the Andean Jurists Commission, and the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, participants developed the "[Regional Action Plan to Advance the Right to Access Information](#)."

Engaging the public through outreach and action with national, state and local organizations, or with the public more directly

We continue to devote time to engaging new coalition members (now more than 70 organizations and more than 200 individuals) to join our work with theirs.

Sunshine Week National Dialogue

OpenTheGovernment.org hosted the 4th Annual Sunshine Week National Dialogue, "[Opening Doors: Finding the Keys to Open Government](#),"¹⁴ on March 20, 2009 at the Center for American Progress. The webcast panel discussion featured Vivek Kundra, federal Chief Information Officer (CIO); Katherine McFate, a Program Officer for Government Performance and Accountability in the Ford Foundation's Governance Unit; Beth Noveck, deputy chief technology officer for open government and leader for

¹⁴ <http://openingdoors.openthegovernment.org/>

President Obama's Open Government Initiative; and Dan Chenok, a member of President Obama's "Technology, Innovation and Government Reform" transition team, former branch chief for information policy and technology in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and currently senior vice president and general manager of Pragmatics. During the webcast, panelists answered questions from the live audience and local sites across the country.

The event began a great opportunity for the public to be involved in the crafting of the new Administration's open government directive. The program was webcast from the Center for American Progress in Washington, DC to 18 registered host sites around the country, which then held their own discussions of local, state, and national access concerns. More than 400 people logged in from around the country to view it. We had well over 100 people at the DC event. The event has been viewed more than 2,000 times since March 20th and is now freely available [on our website](#). To continue the discussion after the event, OTG set up the [OpenGovernmentDirective Google group](#). This group continues to grow and serve as a venue for discussion of the Directive issued on December 8, 2009.

Policy & News Updates.

Published biweekly online,¹⁵ each edition provided updates on the status of legislation, news about the work of coalition partners, and highlights of media coverage of open government issues.

Membership

Overall, our organizational coalition partners have increased steadily, from 38 in early 2005 to more than 70 currently.

We also have 205 individual signatories to our Statement of Values.

Total members of OpenTheGov e-mail list (for Updates, alerts, announcements, etc.) as of 12/31/09: 3,306, an increase of 193 new members since 2008.

Building Communication and Collaboration Among National and State Groups

We have an increasing number of state-level organizations and coalitions as partners. Seven state-level FOI coalitions are partners in OpenTheGovernment.org; 27 other state-based groups are also partners. We continue to work with our Steering Committee partner, the National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) to promote collaboration.

The coalition's Director, Patrice McDermott, spoke to several state-based organizations. She participated on a panel discussing open government at the Portland Central Library and the 2009 Oregon Library Association (OLA) Conference. She also gave a speech on restoring open government during the 2009 Washington Library Association (WLA) Conference and keynoted the 6th annual First Amendment Awards and Scholarship Dinner of the Fort Worth Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. Additionally, she was a panelist in the Virginia Coalition for Open Government's annual conference, Access 2009.

¹⁵ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/article/subarchive/60>

Strengthening Relationships with Conservatives

As open government is not a partisan issue, we have been working actively with our partner, the Liberty Coalition, to strengthen relationships with conservatives and conservative organization.

Action Alerts

We continue to use our action center to create timely alerts and send messages to our members and partners. Action alerts can be sent to our whole list or targeted to specific members in specific districts or states. We also highlight action alerts from our coalition partners on our website.

Selected Campaigns	Date Launched	Total # of Participants who sent letters to Congress
Help Open Access to CRS Reports	29-Oct	106
Tell the Senate to Improve Campaign Contribution Disclosure	3-March	39
Yes on Electronic Disclosure; No on Roberts	7-July	11

BETTER PUBLICIZING SECRECY EFFORTS

Raising the visibility of a secrecy/openness message through work with the media, through our website and through coordination with our partners

Web Site

We are working with a web designer and information architecture specialist to make our web site more informative, usable, and lively.

of Unique Visitors by Month

January	2009	3455	July	2009	3182
February	2009	4405	August	2009	3136
March	2009	7917	September	2009	4979
April	2009	4863	October	2009	3779
May	2009	4296	November	2009	3701
June	2009	3492	December	2009	4125

Total: 51330

Other venues for reaching the public and others working in our community

Patrice McDermott appeared on *Whistle Where You Work*, a multimedia program produced by the Government Accountability Project (GAP) to discuss the Obama Administration’s transparency agenda.

The OTG steering committee hosted a discussion and social hour with Norm Eisen, Special Counsel to the President for Ethics and Government Reform, to provide DC-area

coalition partners and friends with an opportunity to interact and discuss on-going issues in an informal environment.

The staff of OpenTheGovernment.org continues to pursue opportunities to work with new media and to learn how to convey our message to and through them. OTG launched both a [facebook fan page](#) and a [Twitter feed](#) to distribute reports and bi-weekly updates beyond traditional followers, and to raise awareness of secrecy and openness issues.

Press

OpenTheGovernment.org was quoted or mentioned more than 90 times in news stories and editorials in 2009. Also, Director Patrice McDermott gave a number of radio interviews. In 2009, we gave AP an exclusive on the release of our Secrecy Report Card. The AP story was picked up by publications across the country, and the report was covered by at least 18 separate media outlets and blogs after its release. Figures from the report continue to be cited by the media in news accounts and editorials.

<i>Lexis/Nexis Search Term</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2005</i>	<i>2006</i>	<i>2007</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2009</i>
“government secrecy” (in All News Plus Wires, and Newspapers, magazines, trade press)	523	965	1258	1320	1240	1264	1264
“freedom of information” (in All News Plus Wires, and Newspapers, magazines, trade press)	>10,000	> 10,000	>10,000	>10,000	>3,000*	>3,000*	>3,000*
“OpenTheGovernment.org” (in All News Plus Wires, and Newspapers, magazines, trade press)	-	59	137	61	157	220	169

* We previously conducted searches in Westlaw, which cuts off its counts at 10,000; Lexis-Nexis cuts them off at 3,000.

Conducting research and analysis

We continue producing highly-praised policy updates and issue-tracking compendia. Each *Policy & News Update* provides policy advocates and others with updates on the status of legislation, news about the work of coalition partners, and highlights of media coverage of open government issues. We send the *Update* on a roughly biweekly basis to over 3,000 people, most of whom are self-subscribed. Editions have featured substantive reporting on events, hearings, etc., and occasional interviews with informed partners on important and timely topics.

Secrecy Report Card

We publish an annual edition of the Secrecy Report Card in September. The first Secrecy Report Card was issued by OpenTheGovernment.org in 2004, chronicling the events in

secrecy and openness in 2003. As readers will recall, that was the year of the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq and the third year of the Bush-Cheney Administration. Over the course of the last five years, we charted a significant increase in secrecy and a concomitant decrease in accountability—especially to the public, but also to Congress. OpenTheGovernment.org seeks to identify measurable indicators that can be used as benchmarks to evaluate openness and secrecy in government in the United States. We include data based on three criteria:

- data that show trends over time;
- data that have an impact across the federal government or the general public; and
- data that already exist and require little or no further analysis.

These indicators are not intended to be comprehensive; there are many indicators that could be included. We continue to add to the indicators as we become aware of them and they fit the focus of the report.

For 2009 only, we added two sections: one on fiscal transparency and one providing a quick look at the openness and secrecy trends in the new Administration.

In 2009, we gave AP an exclusive on its release. The AP story was picked up by several publications across the country, and the report was covered by at least 18 separate media outlets and blogs after its release. Figures from the report continue to be cited by the media in news accounts and editorials.

Other reports

OTG staff worked with coalition partner the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) and the Sunlight Foundation to promote the launch of “[Show Us the Data](#),” a web-based survey to gather public input on government documents that should be freely available, but are not. [Show Us the Data: Most Wanted Federal Documents](#),¹⁶ released by OpenTheGovernment.org and the Center for Democracy and Technology cites documents and data that the federal government should make easier to find and to use, and recommends policy changes to make government more open.

OpenTheGovernment.org’s Director wrote a chapter, “*Open the Government, A New Information Policy*”, for Mandate for Change: Policies and Leadership for 2009 and Beyond, (January 2009) from the Institute for Policy Studies.

¹⁶ <http://www.openthegovernment.org/otg/TopTenReport.pdf>