

OpenTheGovernment.org

Americans for Less Secrecy, More Democracy

May 2, 2007

The Honorable
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator :

We, the undersigned member organizations of OpenTheGovernment.org, write to urge you to support the OPEN Government Act of 2007 (S. 849), as introduced by Senators Cornyn and Leahy. Your co-sponsorship of the bill would be especially appreciated.

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), meant to ensure the public's access to the records of its government, has been eroded and weakened over the years. Many agencies employ stalling tactics and do not appear to take the mandates of the law seriously. The public has indicated it wants transparency and accountability from the government. This legislation is an important step in that direction. As Senator Cornyn has said, "Open government is one of the most basic requirements of a healthy democracy. It allows taxpayers to see where their money is going; it permits the honest exchange of information ensuring government accountability; and it upholds the ideal that government never rules without the consent of the people."

The bill contains more than a dozen substantive provisions designed to achieve the following four objectives:

- Strengthen FOIA and close loopholes;
- Help FOIA requestors obtain timely responses to their requests;
- Ensure that agencies have strong incentives to act on FOIA requests in a timely fashion; and
- Provide FOIA officials with all of the tools they need to ensure that our government remains open and accessible.

We hope we can count on your support for S. 849 to strengthen openness and accountability in the federal government.

If you have any questions, please contact Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, at 202-332-6736. To co-sponsor the bill, please contact Reed O'Connor, Judiciary Committee chief counsel for Senator Cornyn, at 202-224-5225.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries
American Booksellers Foundation for
Free Expression
American Library Association
Association of American Publishers
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Californians Aware
Center for Democracy and Technology
Common Cause
Defending Dissent Foundation
Electronic Frontier Foundation
EnviroJustice
Essential Information
Federation of American Scientists
Florida First Amendment Foundation
Free Expression Policy Project
Friends Committee on National
Legislation
Fund for Constitutional Government
Government Accountability Project
Indiana Coalition for Open Government
Liberty Coalition

Mine Safety and Health News
Minnesota Coalition on Government
Information
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Freedom of Information
Coalition
National Security Archive
OMB Watch
PEN American Center
People For the American Way
Political Research Associates
Project on Government Oversight
(POGO)
Public Employees for Environmental
Responsibility (PEER)
ReadtheBill.org Education Fund
ReclaimDemocracy.org
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the
Press
Society of American Archivists
Society of Professional Journalists
Special Libraries Association
Taxpayers for Common Sense