

February 19, 2013

Chairman Darrell Issa
US House of Representatives
House Oversight and Government Reform
Committee
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Elijah Cummings
US House of Representatives
House Oversight and Government Reform
Committee
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Cummings:

The undersigned organizations, concerned with government openness and accountability, are writing to thank you and share our support for your work to hold agencies accountable for implementation of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Your February 4th, 2013 letter to the Office of Information Policy at the Department of Justice poses important questions regarding OIP's role in government-wide FOIA policy implementation, compliance, and enforcement.

We greatly appreciate the breadth and detail of your requests for information from OIP. As you know, outdated FOIA regulations, excessive fee assessments, growing FOIA backlogs, and the misuse of exemptions are issues that continually frustrate FOIA requesters and are major concerns for many in the transparency community.

As you point out in your letter, FOIA is an important option the public has for accessing information about the government's activities. This tool is much less meaningful, however, if the public cannot use it to get timely access to the information to which they are entitled. Your letter is an excellent step towards identifying where a lack of oversight and attention on the part of OIP is contributing to these problems. We hope you will share your responses from OIP with the public, and look forward to future oversight hearings.

Thank you, again, for your attention to this issue of critical importance to transparent and accountable government. We welcome your continued oversight on this issue. To discuss these issues in greater detail, please contact Patrice McDermott, Executive Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, at pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org or 202-332-6736.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries

American Association of University Professors

American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression

American Library Association

American Society of News Editors

Association of American Publishers

Association of Research Libraries

Bill of Rights Defense Committee – BORDC

Californians Aware

Cause of Action

Center for Effective Government (formerly OMB Watch)

Center for Media and Democracy

Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington – CREW

Defending Dissent Foundation

DownsizeDC.org, Inc.

Electronic Frontier Foundation – EFF

Electronic Privacy Information Center – EPIC

First Amendment Coalition

Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism

Freedom to Read Foundation

Friends of the Earth

Government Accountability Project – GAP

iSolon.org

The James Madison Project

Liberty Coalition

Mine Safety and Health News

National Coalition Against Censorship

National Coalition for History

National Freedom of Information Coalition

National Priorities Project

National Security Archive

National Security Counselors

OpenTheGovernment.org

Project On Government Oversight – POGO

Society of American Archivists

Society of Professional Journalists

Special Libraries Association

Taxpayers for Common Sense

Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse – TRAC

Tully Center for Free Speech at Syracuse University

Understanding Government

Utah Foundation for Open Government

Washington Civil Rights Council

Washington Coalition for Open Government