

July 28, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
S-231, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader Reid, Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker Boehner and Minority Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations concerned with government openness and accountability, we are writing to urge you to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627, now known as the Budget Control Act of 2011.

This week, Speaker Boehner took S.627 as a vehicle for his budget bill. This procedural maneuver could shave a few days off of Senate consideration, should the House pass the Boehner budget control bill. However, in doing so, the Speaker unnecessarily stripped the Faster FOIA Act from S.627, completely replacing the language with the budget bill. If the Faster FOIA language is not restored in S. 627, the bipartisan progress made by the Senate on the legislation will be wiped out. This is a setback for openness and accountability in the executive branch, and bipartisan action in Congress.

The Senate unanimously passed the Faster FOIA Act, authored by Senator Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Cornyn (R-TX) in May. The legislation would establish the Commission on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Processing Delays (the Commission) to examine several thorny issues that create unreasonable bars to public access under the FOIA and recommend to Congress and the President steps that should be taken to reduce delays and make the administration of the FOIA equitable and efficient throughout the federal government.

The Faster FOIA Act enjoys strong support among a broad range of non-governmental organizations. Recently, more than 35 organizations joined to urge the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to act on the legislation. A recent editorial in the **Washington Post** also called on the House to embrace the bill in the same bipartisan spirit as the Senate in the interest of improving the FOIA process.

We urge you to advance openness and accountability to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627. We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Library Association
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington – CREW

Electronic Frontier Foundation
Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism
Fund for Constitutional Government
National Freedom of Information Coalition
National Security Archive
OMB Watch
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight – POGO
Public Citizen
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

cc: Senator Patrick Leahy
 Senator John Cornyn