



Sunshine in Government Initiative

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July 28, 2011

The Honorable Harry Reid
United States Senate

The Honorable John Boehner
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
United States Senate

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
United States House of Representatives

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

We urge the Congress to reinstate the bipartisan, uncontroversial language strengthening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was removed from S. 627, the Faster FOIA Act, as it was amended to address the unrelated issue surrounding the debt limit. The original language would create a bipartisan commission to recommend concrete ways to strengthen transparency in the federal government and has broad, bipartisan support.

The **Sunshine in Government Initiative** is a coalition of media associations promoting government transparency, especially focusing on FOIA. **SGI members** include the **American Society of News Editors, The Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, National Newspaper Association, Newspaper Association of America, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and Society of Professional Journalists.**

Especially in this fiscal environment, the Faster FOIA Commission would help the public understand how taxpayer dollars are being spent by bringing together experts inside and outside the government to look “under the hood” of agency FOIA operations and to propose within a year the most realistic, effective and cost-efficient improvements to improve government transparency.

The Freedom of Information Act is the vital law that helps ensure the public can see what its government is up to while protecting personal privacy, national security, trade secrets and other important interests. The Commission’s work should provide timely insight to help inform next steps that Congress with your leadership might undertake to strengthen transparency in the federal government.

Sincerely,

Rick Blum
Coordinator

Cc: Senator Patrick Leahy
Senator John Cornyn

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