

Chairman Jason Chaffetz  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
2236 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

June 12, 2015

Dear Chairman Chaffetz,

Thank you for your request for comments on pending Freedom of Information Act reform legislation, specifically regarding possible changes that would require deeper structural changes to FOIA. We are pleased to respond to the request. In doing so, we want to clearly state our request is that the current FOIA legislation be considered and passed by the House without substantial modification. This will lock in improvements likely to be accepted by the Senate with a minimum of delay.

We wish to highlight the fact that significant improvements were made in the House of Representatives during the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform's markup of the FOIA Oversight and Implementation Act of 2015 ("FOIA Act"). Efforts by some to weaken the legislation, specifically with regards to how it would apply to entities that regulate the financial industry, were rightfully questioned and rejected. We wish to specifically single out for praise the House's updating of Exemption 5, which should help ensure a reduction in the amount of secret law to which Americans are subject.

We look forward to passage of the current FOIA legislation, and are eager to work with you in securing further necessary reforms that must follow on its heels. We understand that several organizations have responded to your request for comments and submitted recommendations that would lead to important FOIA advancements. We hope to supplement those with additional recommendations at a later time. Please contact Patrice McDermott at [OpenTheGovernment.org](http://OpenTheGovernment.org) ([pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org](mailto:pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org)), Sean Vitka at Sunlight Foundation ([svitka@sunlightfoundation.com](mailto:svitka@sunlightfoundation.com)) or Daniel Schuman at Demand Progress ([daniel@demandprogress.org](mailto:daniel@demandprogress.org)) with any questions.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union  
American Library Association  
American Society of News Editors  
Association of Alternative Newsmedia  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee  
Campaign for Accountability  
Center for Science and Democracy at the  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in  
Washington

Defending Dissent Foundation  
Demand Progress  
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)  
Government Accountability Project  
National Security Archive  
The OpenGov Foundation  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)  
Rural Coalition  
Society of Professional Journalists  
Sunlight Foundation