

Sunshine in Government Initiative

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SGI Statement on Senate Judiciary Committee's Approval of S. 849, the OPEN Government Act

The Sunshine in Government Initiative (SGI) applauds the Senate Judiciary Committee for passing legislation to give the public better tools to know what the government is doing by strengthening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

This legislation, S. 849, is now poised for consideration by the full Senate. Congress last strengthened FOIA in 1996, and since then the law has become less effective as a tool for the public to use government records to become informed about government activities in our democracy.

SGI appreciates the work of Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and John Cornyn (R-TX) for originally introducing legislation (S. 849) in the Senate to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), in addition to the co-sponsorship of Sens. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Russ Feingold (D-WI), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), John Kerry (D-MA) and Arlen Specter (R-PA).

We applaud Congress -- both the House and Senate -- for acting to strengthen the public's right to know. Last month, the House of Representatives passed a similar bill, H.R. 1309, by an overwhelming margin (308-117).

The strong bipartisan support for FOIA reform shows significant reforms are long overdue. Open government is a nonpartisan issue. We look forward to a full Senate acting soon to strengthen FOIA and to continuing to work with Congress and the executive branch to improve FOIA and other open government policies and practices.

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is a coalition of ten media groups promoting open and accountable government. For more information, visit www.sunshineingovernment.org.

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