

Sunshine in Government Initiative

1101 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 1100 · Arlington, Virginia 22209
Phone (703) 807-2100 · Fax (703) 807-2109
www.SunshineInGovernment.org · info@SunshineInGovernment.org



MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rick Blum, SGI Coordinator
rblum@sunshineingovernment.org
703-807-2100 or 202-309-2654 (cell)

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Senate approves photos ban, better disclosures of FOIA's statutory exemptions Statement of the Sunshine in Government Initiative

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is disappointed that Congress carved out an exception to FOIA to allow the Department of Defense to withhold hundreds of photographs documenting the treatment of detainees held by U.S. forces. With this action, Congress has cut litigation short – despite two court rulings requiring disclosure of the photographs – and drilled one more hole in FOIA and added to the more than 240 exemptions written into law.

At the same time, we applaud the Senate – particularly Senators Patrick Leahy and John Cornyn - for adopting statutory language requiring future exemptions to FOIA to mention the subsection of FOIA – 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(3) – that permits them. The Open FOIA Act gives the public a better chance of finding and debating these proposed exemptions when proposed in legislation.

The Administration and Congress should build on the Open FOIA Act and do more to protect the Freedom of Information Act from harmful, overbroad cuts. While we are disappointed that potentially valuable information will not be disclosed, we remain hopeful that better disclosure of proposed exemptions will help protect FOIA.

We look forward to working with Congress, the administration and others to further preserve and strengthen the Freedom of Information Act.

The **Sunshine in Government Initiative (SGI)** is a coalition of nine media groups promoting openness and accountability in government. Members of the SGI coalition include: **American Society of News Editors, Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, Newspaper Association of America, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Society of Professional Journalists.**

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is a coalition of media groups committed to promoting policies that ensure the government is accessible, accountable and open. Public oversight is the ultimate safeguard of democracy. It is the inalienable right of citizens to examine and judge their government; and that right is served when news media act on behalf of the public to gain access to information. More information is online at www.sunshineingovernment.org.

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