



Press Release

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Open Government Advocates Urge the Senate to Improve Public Access to CRS Reports

WASHINGTON, May 14, 2009 - More than 40 organizations and advocates concerned with government transparency signed on to a letter asking the Senate Rules Committee to hold public hearings on open government issues and to mark-up and pass a resolution by Senator Lieberman (D-CT), S.R. 118 that would improve public access to reports by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). The breadth of organizations supporting the letter, which was organized by the Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) and OpenTheGovernment.org, reflects the importance of public access to CRS reports.

American taxpayers spend over \$100 million a year to fund the CRS, which generates detailed reports relevant to current political events for lawmakers. But, while the reports are non-classified, and play a critical role in our legislative process, they have never been made available in a consistent and official way to members of the public. A recent report by OpenTheGovernment.org and CDT, "[Show Us the Data: Most Wanted Federal Documents](#)" identified CRS reports as the number one most desired government document by the public. This report has been issued three times in the past 10 years, with CRS reports in the top 10 each time.

According to Ari Schwartz, Vice President of CDT, S.R. 118 presents the Rules Committee with the opportunity to actively demonstrate a commitment to open government and accountability. "By marking up and passing S.R. 118, the Rules Committee would allow the Senate to take an inexpensive step to improve our democracy."

Patrice McDermott, Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, praised the Rules Committee's recent decision to make Congressional information more open and accessible by publishing Senate votes as XML files and urged the Senate to do more. "It is our hope that Congress will work with the executive branch to truly create an unprecedented level of openness in government."

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OpenTheGovernment.org is a coalition transcending party lines of more than 65 consumer and good government groups, librarians, environmentalists, labor, journalists, and others - focused on pushing back governmental secrecy and promoting openness.