

What They're Saying About The OPEN Government Act

"Yet FOIA hasn't been substantively updated since the 1990s – which is why a new bill sponsored by Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, is so vital. ... The full Senate should now show its support for a strong FOIA. The times, once again, demand it." (Editorial, "Americans Need A Stronger Open Records Act To Prod Federal Agencies Into Compliance," *Houston Chronicle*, 5/2/07)

"U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, has worked continually to bring some Texas-size emphasis on open government to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. We wholeheartedly agree with him that open government is one of the most basic requirements of any healthy democracy." (Editorial, "Bill Promotes Texas-Size Openness," *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, 4/24/07)

"A bipartisan law co-authored by Republican Sen. John Cornyn of Texas would help Americans deal with their own government with a set of useful new tools, like the creation of an open-records ombudsman, a hotline and tough deadlines for agency compliance." (Editorial, "Locked Away," *Dallas Morning News*, 6/28/07)

Sen. John Cornyn of Texas, a Republican, and Sen. Patrick Leahy of Vermont, a Democrat, fashioned a new version of the law and call it the OPEN Government Act. It would put teeth in the act and force the bureaucracy to respond to requests for public documents. ... An updated open government law is sorely needed. The backlog of requests is at an all-time high, and people can wait years for records." (Editorial, "Government Secrecy Clouds This Independence Day," *Austin American-Statesman*, 7/4/07)

"This move to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act should be supported. This act is a reminder that the government is the servant, not the master, of the people. To perform their responsibilities, government officials must have authority. Unfortunately, it is easy for people in positions of power to abuse that authority. That's why it is oh so important that the functions of the government be as accessible as they can be without endangering national security." (Editorial, "Freedom Of Information Act Could Use Some Strengthening," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, 7/4/07)

"The Leahy-Cornyn bill would have shifted the balance back toward openness and put a bite on those who would withhold information improperly. The hold on the bill is a perfect example of why this reform is desperately needed." (Editorial: Skulking In The Senate," *Daily Herald* [UT], 5/29/07)

"The legislation deserves to pass ... All Americans have a stake in open government. Bolstering the law that provides access to government activity is necessary." (Editorial, "Blocking Open Government Bill Is Height Of Hypocrisy," *The Tennessean*, 6/23/07)

"The OPEN Government Act is a good step in the direction of providing greater access." (Editorial: Kyl Slams Door Shut," *Brattleboro Reformer*, 6/21/07)

"The Open Government Act, sponsored by Sens. Pat Leahy, D-Vt., and John Cornyn, R-Texas, would remove a variety of loopholes in the Freedom of Information Act and make it easier to obtain federal public records in a timely manner. Anyone who has tried to get their hands on a federal document, and has waited anywhere from weeks to years for a response, will know why this bill is so important." (Editorial, "Note To Senate: Time To Cease The Secrets," *East Valley Tribune* [AZ], 6/5/07)

"The bill has plenty of bipartisan support. It is the product of tireless work and advocacy by many open-government and press-freedom groups and fine legislative craftsmanship by Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., and Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas." (Charles Davis, Op-Ed, "Senate's 'Secret Hold' Blocks Our Right To Know," *Miami Herald*, 6/5/07)

"The most important parts of what is being called the Open Government Act would set up meaningful deadlines for agencies to act and a system to track requests; impose penalties for missed deadlines; clarify that the law applies to

agency records held by private contractors; establish a FOIA hotline; and create a FOIA ombudsman.” (Deborah Howell, Op-Ed, “New Life For An Open-Government Law,” *The Washington Post*, 6/24/07)

“We acknowledge the senator has a solid record of strong support for open government – something all Americans can appreciate. We need more people in government like Sen. Cornyn who believe that our system works best when the people are informed.” (Editorial, “Cornyn Merits Praise For Work To Boost FOIA,” *Hereford Brand*, 3/18/07)

“The bill has broad, bipartisan support. After approval by the Senate committee, the next step should have been consideration -- and probably approval -- by the full Senate.” (David B. Offer, Op-Ed, “Public Served When ‘Sen. Secrecy’ Unmasked,” *Central Maine Morning Sentinel*, 6/5/07)

“U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, has been an aggressive advocate for overhauling the largely toothless and ignored law.” (Editorial, “Ongoing Quest For Transparency,” *Austin American-Statesman*, 3/16/07)

“Sen. Cornyn and his like-minded colleagues believe you deserve to know more about how your elected officials are working on your behalf and how your tax dollars are being spent.” (Editorial, “Close FOIA Loopholes, Let In Sunshine,” *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, 3/15/07)

“Reforms like these could get more information to Americans and get it to them fast. They also are based on Texas’ freedom of information laws, which Mr. Cornyn shaped as attorney general. We commend him for taking this lead and hope S.849 moves through the chamber by June.” (Editorial, “Cornyn, Pro And Con,” *Dallas Morning News*, 3/21/07)

“Senators Leahy and Cornyn are making clear to agencies that obstruction and delay are not acceptable when members of the public ask the government about what it does and what it is failing to do,” said Meredith Fuchs, general counsel at the National Security Archive, a public research library at George Washington University. “There seems to be tremendous bipartisan energy behind this bill.” (Rebecca Carr, “New Bill Pushes Effort To Open Up Government,” *Austin American-Statesman*, 3/14/07)

“National Sunshine Week is an event in which the spotlight falls on a never-ending struggle to improve access to federal government records. ... One key development in Washington came ... when Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, a member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, joined the committee chairman Patrick Leahy, D-Vt., in introducing the bipartisan OPEN Government Act of 2007.” (Editorial, “Washington Could Use A Little Texas Sunshine,” *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, 3/15/07)

“[T]he Openness Promotes Effectiveness in National Government, or OPEN, Act is an essential reinforcement of the Freedom of Information Act. ... Congress should pass the OPEN Act to restore the presumption of transparency in government.” (Editorial, “Restore Transparency With The OPEN Act,” *San Antonio Express-News*, 3/19/07)

“[C]ongress should pass reforms to the FOI act proposed last week by our own Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Sen. Patrick Leahy, D-Vermont. ... We strongly urge the U.S. Senate to consider the Cornyn-Leahy bill ...” (Editorial, “Iraq And Open Government,” *Daily Texan*, 3/20/07)

“Texas has been fortunate in recent years to have attorneys general who understand the public’s right — and need — to know what our government is doing, at all levels. One of those is current U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, [who] has continued his advocacy for open government to our nation’s Capitol, filing several bills that would require governments to make the process of getting public information easier and faster. Unfortunately, his efforts have met with mixed success, but he continues his efforts and we applaud and encourage him to continue.” (Editorial, “You’ll Pay For This,” *The Brownsville Herald*, 3/15/07)

“We commend Congress for introducing legislation that promotes openness in government.” (Editorial, “Let The Sun Shine In,” *Times Reporter* [PA], 3/15/07)

"Now, Congress is poised to adopt a series of bills that strengthen the public's right to know what their government is up to. These measures are badly needed. They merit our strongest endorsement." (Editorial, "For Open Government," *The Miami Herald*, 3/18/07)

"Taken together, the impending congressional action marks the biggest advancement for open government in over a decade, said Rick Blum, coordinator of the Sunshine in Government Initiative, a coalition of ten media groups dedicated to open government issues." (Rebecca Carr, "New Bill Pushes Effort To Open Up Government," *Austin American-Statesman*, 3/14/07)

"Congress is moving forward this week with much-needed Freedom of Information Act reforms, including measures to create tracking numbers for all FOIA requests, creation of an ombudsman to help people navigate the FOIA, encourage agencies to settle FOIA disputes without litigation and penalizing agencies that improperly delay responding to FOIA requests." (Editorial, "An Officer's Lot Is A Fiscally Prudent One," *San Francisco Examiner*, 3/13/07)

"These proposals couldn't have come at a better time. According to a report by OpenTheGovernment.org, government secrecy continues to expand." (Editorial, "Let The Sun Shine In," *Times Reporter [PA]*, 3/15/07)

"The bipartisan OPEN Government Act contains more than a dozen substantive provisions. Its objectives include strengthening FOIA and closing loopholes; help FOIA requestors obtain timely responses to requests; ensure that agencies have strong incentives to act on FOIA requests in a timely fashion and provide FOIA officials with tools needed to ensure that government remains open and accessible." (Editorial, "Washington Could Use A Little Texas Sunshine," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, 3/15/07)

"These are common-sense changes that should be adopted without controversy. Credit goes to senators John Cornyn, R-Texas, and Patrick Leahy, D-Conn., and representatives Henry Waxman, D-Calif., and Todd Platts, R-Penn., for pushing these reforms." (Editorial, "An Officer's Lot Is A Fiscally Prudent One," *San Francisco Examiner*, 3/13/07)

"The OPEN Government Act would set up strong incentives for agencies to act on FOIA requests in a timely fashion. It would restore meaningful deadlines requiring agency action on FOIA requests within 20 days of their receipt – and would impose consequences on federal agencies missing statutory deadlines." (Editorial, "Close FOIA Loopholes, Let In Sunshine," *Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, 3/15/07)

"Other aspects of the bill deal seek to lessen economic disincentives to requesting public information by helping define cost structures and provide for waivers of charges imposed for government documents and records. This would be a welcome feature in open records laws, one that state officials should note." (Editorial, "You'll Pay For This," *The Brownsville Herald*, 3/15/07)
