



Sunshine in Government Initiative

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President-elect Barack Obama:

To counteract years of growing government secrecy in a climate in Washington increasingly hostile to the people's right to know, the Sunshine in Government Initiative (SGI), a coalition of media groups committed to promoting open government, encourages your transition team and new administration to take immediate, concrete steps to strengthen open government. In particular, we suggest that you take four specific steps soon after entering the White House to reinforce a commitment to transparency. These recommendations are outlined in the attached white paper.

SGI consists of nine media organizations that believe in open government. Members include: **American Society of Newspaper Editors, The Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, National Association of Broadcasters, National Newspaper Association, Newspaper Association of America, Radio-Television News Directors Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and Society of Professional Journalists.**

The enclosed set of recommendations outlines four specific actions your administration can take early in your administration to help fulfill your commitment to using technology to strengthen openness in the federal government. Specifically, we urge you to:

- 1. Restore the presumption of disclosure across the executive branch.**
- 2. Create an independent, online ombudsman to help citizens access their government.**
- 3. Ban agencies from proposing or endorsing unnecessary statutory exemptions from disclosure. Any new statutory exemptions proposed or supported by the administration should be limited in scope and life and include oversight.**
- 4. Speak on the record, and urge his senior deputies and aides to do the same, in all statements about policy and current news about public matters.**

Representatives of the Sunshine in Government Initiative would be happy to sit down with representatives of your transition team and administration to discuss these recommendations at your earliest convenience. To discuss these recommendations, please contact Claudia James (202-393-1010 or <james@podesta.com>) or myself (703-807-2100 or rblum@sunshineingovernment.org).

Sincerely,

Rick Blum
Coordinator