

December 7, 2016

OMB Director Shaun Donovan

Dear Director Donovan,

We write to you on behalf of a non-partisan coalition, committed to both privacy protection and open government, to ask that the Office of Management and Budget (“OMB”) suspend action on any pending rules or regulations that would diminish the effectiveness of the Privacy Act or the Freedom of Information Act. We are prepared to provide analysis in support of any such determination, now pending before the OMB.

The two laws operate as bulwarks of our democracy, helping to ensure the transparency of the federal government while protecting the privacy of the personal data retained by federal agencies. We believe it is essential that OMB leave in place the strongest possible safeguards to ensure government accountability for the next administration.

Specifically, we ask that the OMB approve no pending rule that would expand the ability of a government agency to exempt their system of records from Privacy Act obligations by asserting a “routine use” or other exemption. (We note the Office of Government Information Services supports a single “routine use” rule change that would improve resolution of FOIA disputes. We do not oppose that rule). We also ask OMB to oppose any new barriers to individuals seeking information under the FOIA.

We appreciate your leadership at the OMB, and your commitment to the effective enforcement of the Freedom of Information Act and the Privacy Act. The two laws are the twin pillars of government accountability.

For further information regarding this request, please contact Patrice McDermott ([pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org](mailto:pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org)), Executive Director of the OpenTheGovernment.org coalition or Marc Rotenberg ([rotenberg@epic.org](mailto:rotenberg@epic.org)), President of the Electronic Privacy Information Center.

Sincerely,

Access Info Europe  
African American Ministers In Action (AAMIA)  
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
American Association of Law Libraries  
American Library Association  
American Policy Center  
Association of Research Libraries  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation  
Campaign for Accountability

Center for Digital Democracy  
Center for Financial Privacy and Human Rights  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington  
Constitutional Alliance  
Consumer Action  
Cyber Privacy Project  
Demand Progress  
Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC)  
Essential Information  
Government Accountability Project  
The James Madison Project  
Mississippi Center for Freedom of Information  
National Association of Social Workers (NASW)  
National Center for Transgender Equality  
National Council of Churches  
National Security Archive  
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Patient Privacy Rights  
PEN America  
People For the American Way  
Pesticide Action Network (PANNA)  
Privacy Rights Clearinghouse  
Privacy Times  
Project On Government Oversight (POGO)  
Reclaim The Records  
Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Restore The Fourth  
Rural Coalition  
Society of Professional Journalists  
Southern Poverty Law Center  
Sunlight Foundation  
Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC)  
Washington Coalition for Open Government

cc: Chairman Bob Goodlatte and Ranking Member John Conyers  
House Judiciary Committee

Chairman Jason Chaffetz and Ranking Member Elijah Cummings  
House Committee on Oversight & Government Reform

Chairman Chuck Grassley and Ranking Member Patrick Leahy  
Senate Judiciary Committee

Chairman Ron Johnson and Ranking Member Thomas R. Carper  
Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs