

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



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, November 10, 2008

CONTACT: Rick Blum (703) 807-2100
rblum@sunshineingovernment.org

Ensure openness, media groups tell Obama administration

The Sunshine in Government Initiative suggested today that the new Administration of President-elect Barack Obama should take four immediate, concrete steps to strengthen open government to counteract years of growing government secrecy in a climate in Washington increasingly hostile to the people's right to know.

"President-Elect Obama can act quickly to make transparency in government a signature component of the Obama Administration," said Rick Blum, the coalition's coordinator said. SGI's recommendations help the public stay informed of government activities by bringing down barriers to accessing public information. "These actions would show President-elect Obama intends to fulfill his pledge to restore open government in Washington," Blum said.

The Sunshine in Government Initiative (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.**

Specifically, early in his administration, the President-elect Obama should:

- 1. Restore the presumption of disclosure across the executive branch.** Federal agencies should exercise their discretion to withhold information under the Freedom of Information Act only when a foreseeable harm would result from disclosure.
- 2. Create an independent, online ombudsman to help citizens access their government.** The Obama administration should quickly ramp up the Office of Government Information Services at the National Archives and Records Administration to mediate disclosure disputes.
- 3. Ban agencies from proposing or endorsing unnecessary statutory exemptions from disclosure.** Any new laws proposed or supported by the administration to specifically exempt certain information from disclosure 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.**

We believe these transparency action items will lay a strong foundation for open government in the Obama Administration. A brief, 4-page white paper outlining the issues and recommendations is available at sunshineingovernment.org.

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 ·
The Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press · Society of Professional Journalists