



# AMERICANS FOR TAX REFORM

GROVER G. NORQUIST

PRESIDENT

July 2, 2007

Dear Senator:

**On behalf of American taxpayers I write to urge you to support S. 849, the “Openness Promotes Effectiveness in our National Government Act” or OPEN Government Act sponsored by Senator John Cornyn (R-TX).**

**Accountability is one of the cornerstones of representative democracy.** Polls conducted during Sunshine Week of 2007 have shown that Americans believe public access to government records is critical to the functioning of good government. For example, 81 percent of respondents to a Washington State University survey agreed that democracy requires government operate openly.

**Government derives its “just powers from the consent of the governed.” Access to information is the prerequisite to making educated decisions.** And while important steps have been taken to promote accessibility and transparency in government – an important example being the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (S.2590) – more could and should be done, particularly in today’s information age.

**The OPEN Government Act provides important reforms to an indispensable law put in place in 1966 to ensure public access to government records.** The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) continues to be a vital tool to shed light on the ways in which the Federal Government operates. However, its effectiveness has been hampered by increasingly long delays and lenient compliance.

By giving citizens requesting information under FOIA the possibility to track their requests, creating an ombudsman to help requesters, and tightening compliance, **S.849 will go a long way to enhance accountability and openness, while at the same time protecting sensitive documents.** Specifically, the bill would ensure that the statutory 20-day compliance deadline sets in immediately upon receipt of the request. Furthermore, it would impose real consequences on agencies missing the deadlines.

**The call for greater transparency transcends party lines.** Like the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, and its emulated versions that are currently being passed at the state level, the OPEN Government Act enjoys broad partisan support.

**I urge you to pass the common sense reforms contained in S.849. In doing so, you will further the ideals this great nation was built upon.**

Sincerely,

Grover Norquist