

December 15, 2005

President George W. Bush  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

Congress has put \$62.3 billion into Hurricane Katrina relief, with billions more expected in help for Gulf Coast recovery efforts. With the federal government spending so much so quickly, opportunities for waste and fraud abound. To help find and stop misuse of taxpayer dollars, Congress, reporters, and the public must be informed of how the dollars are spent. We call on President Bush to post on the Internet copies of every contract, requisition, task/delivery order, agreement or other authorization for spending on Hurricane Katrina relief and reconstruction as soon as contracts are signed, checks are approved or money is disbursed. For such spending that has already occurred, we urge you to direct agencies to put such information online as soon as possible.

Posting vital spending documents online would help the government and taxpayers alike in several ways. Public disclosure will speed the government's ability to track down and stop abuses. Disclosure will inform public debate about the government's response to Hurricane Katrina. In general, public disclosure deters fraud and abuse, so taxpayer dollars may be saved before money is spent. Ultimately, making these documents available online and accessible through a single, searchable website saves taxpayer dollars, makes government work better and helps restore the public's trust in the government's ability to perform effectively.

Furthermore, existing law requires the government to post online any document that can reasonably be expected to have broad public interest. The 1996 amendments to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) require government to make documents in its possession available in an electronic reading room (such as the Internet) if the government expects to receive multiple FOIA requests for the documents. The law also builds in protections for personal privacy and proprietary information. Groups across the political spectrum have raised concerns about Katrina-related contracting and millions of Americans have been directly affected by Hurricane Katrina. These documents meet this standard. In certain instances, government agencies have posted commonly requested documents, a practice which should be adopted for all Hurricane Katrina relief and reconstruction spending.

Putting these documents online in an easily accessible form is easy to do. Summaries already posted by some agencies are inadequate. Only with release of copies of the documents themselves, which includes the detailed contract information, can the government be more accountable and save taxpayer dollars.

For the above reasons, we urge you to make available online in an easily accessible and searchable format all contracts and expenditures related to Hurricane Katrina, in accordance with FOIA, so our country is better able to respond to emergencies, our taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, and our government earns the trust of the people it serves. To follow up on this matter or address any questions about this letter, please contact Rick Blum or Emily Feldman of OpenTheGovernment.org at 202-234-8494 or info@openthegovernment.org. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Mary Alice Baish, Associate Washington Affairs Representative  
**American Association of Law Libraries**

Andy Alexander, Chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee  
**American Society of Newspaper Editors**

Joyce Miller, Director, Community Relations Unit  
**American Friends Service Committee**

Lynne Bradley, Director, Office of Government Relations  
**American Library Association**

John F. Stephens, Ph.D, Executive Director  
**American Studies Association**

Richard Karpel, Executive Director  
**Association of Alternative Newsweeklies**

Suki Dardarian, President  
**Associated Press Managing Editors**

Suzanne Havala Hobbs, Board Member and Chair, FOI and Advocacy Committee  
**Association of Health Care Journalists**

Amanda Hawes, Chair of the Toxics Committee  
**Cal-COSH**

Peter Scheer, Executive Director  
**California First Amendment Coalition**

Mark David Agrast, Senior Fellow  
**Center for American Progress**

Ari Schwartz, Deputy Director  
**Center for Democracy and Technology**

Roberta Baskin, Executive Director  
**Center for Public Integrity**

Pete Weitzel, Coordinator  
**Coalition of Journalists for Open Government**

Celia Viggo Wexler, Vice President for Advocacy  
**Common Cause**

Miles Rapoport, President  
**Demos: A Network for Ideas and Action**

Linda Lenz, President  
**Education Writers Association**

Shari Steele, Executive Director  
**Electronic Frontier Foundation**

David L. Sobel, General Counsel  
**Electronic Privacy Information Center**

Carol Andress, Economic Specialist  
**Environmental Defense**

Judith Robinson, Director of Special Projects  
**Environmental Health Fund**

Steven Aftergood, Project Director  
**Federation of American Scientists**

Conrad Martin, Executive Director  
**Fund for Constitutional Government**

Tom Devine, Legal Director  
**Government Accountability Project**

Howard Pellett, Administrative Coordinator  
**The Green Party of Skagit County, Anacortes, Washington**

Scott Armstrong, Executive Director  
**The Information Trust**

Kay J. Maxwell, President  
**League of Women Voters of the United States**

Michael D. Ostrolenk, Founder/National Director  
**Liberty Coalition**

Renette Dejoie Hall, Executive Editor  
**Louisiana Weekly Publishing Co. Inc**

Steve Bagwell, Managing Editor  
**McMinnville News-Register**, McMinnville, Oregon

R. Bruce Craig, Executive Director  
**National Coalition for History**

Charles N. Davis, Ph.D, Executive Director  
**National Freedom of Information Coalition**

Gai Oglesbee, Domain Manager  
**National Nuclear Victims for Justice**

Thomas S. Blanton, Director  
**National Security Archive**

Sibel D. Edmonds, Director  
**National Security Whistleblowers Coalition**

Paul Gessing, Director of Government Affairs  
**National Taxpayers Union**

Bob Johnson, Executive Director  
**New Mexico Foundation for Open Government**

Kathy Spurlock, Executive Editor  
**The News-Star**, Monroe, LA

Bob Giles, Curator  
**Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University**

Kristin Rothwell, Associate Editor  
**NurseZone.com**

Gary Bass, Executive Director  
**OMB Watch**

Rick Blum, Director  
**OpenTheGovernment.org**

Elliot Minberg, Legal Director  
**People for the American Way**

Danielle Brian, Executive Director  
**Project on Government Oversight**

Michael F. Hollander, Editor  
**Racing Information Systems**

Lucy Dalglish, Executive Director  
**Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press**

Scott Burger, Acting Chair  
**Richmond Greens/Green Party, Richmond, Virginia**

Alan English, Executive Editor  
**The Shreveport Times, Shreveport, Louisiana**

**Society of Environmental Journalists**

David Carlson, President  
**Society of Professional Journalists**

Cammie Donaldson, President  
**Space Coast Progressive Alliance**

Steve Ellis, Vice President of Programs  
**Taxpayers for Common Sense**

Dane vonBreichenruchardt, President  
**US Bill of Rights Foundation**

Mark Tapscott, Director  
Center for Media and Public Policy, The Heritage Foundation\*

Robert J. Freeman, Director  
NYS Committee on Open Government\*

April D. Gallop, President and CEO  
9-11 Elisha Zion Foundation\*

Richard A. Knee, Freelance journalist\*

\*Signing as individuals. Title is for identification purposes only.