

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2010

Dear Colleague:

We are writing to invite you to become a Member of the newly-formed bipartisan Congressional Transparency Caucus.

The United States government derives its power from the informed consent of the governed. To give such consent, the American people must know what their government is doing. They need convenient access to complete, accurate, and timely information about how tax dollars are spent and whether program objectives are achieved.

Information technologies developed in recent decades and ever-widening access to the Internet offer a promise of more transparency and better accountability in government than have ever before been imagined. New ways of exchanging and managing data allow instant searches and analyses that once required hundreds of worker-hours.

Real-time, crowd-sourced citizen oversight of the government's activities has become possible. Once the right policies and data standards are put in place, Americans will be able to track every dollar of government spending, scrutinize the goals and performance of every federal program, and perform searches of millions of forms and filings in a single keystroke. As Justice Brandeis said, sunlight is "the best of disinfectants." Opening the government's data to the American people will help illuminate waste, fraud, and abuse that may now go undetected.

The government's current practices and processes do not facilitate openness and have not kept pace with private sector technologies. Too often, federal agencies and Congress have failed to publish their records and information online, including proposed laws and regulations, and budget and performance data. At other times, data have been published, but in formats that are not easily searchable, sortable, and downloadable. As a result, citizens often perceive federal policies and spending to be obscure, costly, and arbitrary.

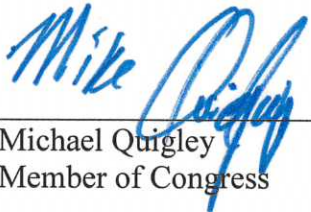
Sweeping changes in law, regulation, and culture are necessary. On March 5, the House Administration Committee approved the establishment of the bipartisan Congressional Transparency Caucus. Our Caucus will pursue education, legislation, and oversight – in that order. We will facilitate exchanges between our Members and experts and activists from across the political spectrum who have been working for decades to open government through technological innovation. We will introduce and vigorously support legislation that requires federal information to be freely accessible, consistently organized, and electronically searchable. And we will monitor the implementation of transparency laws and initiatives – including the Obama Administration's Open Government Directive – to make sure we reach these goals.

March 2010

Page 2

Transparency in government is a goal that transcends partisanship. The Congressional Transparency Caucus will unite Republicans and Democrats to pursue the principles summarized on the attached list. If you agree, we invite you to join us. To join the Caucus, or to request more information, please contact Hudson Hollister or Mark Marin with Rep. Darrell Issa (5-5074) or Lindsey Matese with Rep. Mike Quigley (5-4061).

Sincerely,



Michael Quigley
Member of Congress



Darrell Issa
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform