



» The Watcher » October 20, 2003 Vol. 4 No. 21

In This Issue

Federal Budget

Appropriations and Emergency Supplemental
OMB Watch Goes on the Road with a State-by-State Analysis of the Estate Tax and Charitable Giving
Passage of the CARE Act Remains Uncertain
Internet Taxation and the State Fiscal Picture
JOB WATCH

Information Policy

Texas Attorney General's Ruling Undermines Public Access
EPA Releases Final ECHO Database
Ohio Bill Prohibits Access to Health Information
Scientists Advise Self-Censorship

Nonprofit Issues

FEC Says Donor Lists Cannot be Used for Sending Educational Materials
New Resources Can Help Nonprofits Get Out the Vote

Regulatory Matters

[Administration Issues Watered-Down Food Import Rules](#)
[Whistleblower Says OSHA Blocked Testing of Inspectors Exposed to Toxic Metal](#)
[Administration Lifts Restrictions for Dumping Mining Waste](#)

Right-to-Know

[State Tour Scheduled for EPA's Draft Report on the Environment](#)
[Pentagon Puts Public Papers Back Online](#)
[Supreme Court Is Asked to Hear a Case on Government Secrecy](#)
[A Larger Sunset Proposed for Patriot Act](#)
[Ideas Wanted for 10 Most Wanted Government Docs](#)

Appropriations and Emergency Supplemental

Update on the President's emergency supplemental appropriation for Iraq and Afghanistan and the status of the remaining regular appropriations.

Ultimate passage of the President's \$87 billion emergency supplemental appropriation for Iraq and Afghanistan is almost assured. Whether or not the war in Iraq was supported, there is general agreement that we now have an obligation to provide security and reconstruction. The emergency supplemental pairs reconstruction costs with more funding for the military - making it hard to vote against.

Nevertheless, the United States must "borrow" the \$87 billion by going further into record deficits at a time when many domestic needs remain unmet--the poverty rate is rising, long-term unemployment is at a twenty year high, fewer people than last year have health insurance, and continuing fiscal difficulties in most states herald deep cuts in services and programs. In response to the growing public unease about more spending in Iraq, a bipartisan group of Senators (8 Republicans, 42 Democrats and 1 Independent) passed an amendment to the emergency supplemental appropriation bill (S. 1689) sponsored by Evan Bayh (D-IN) and John Ensign (R-NV) on October 17 that would require that \$10 billion of the \$20.3 billion for reconstruction aid to Iraq be given as a loan, not a grant, unless other countries forgive most of Iraq's existing debt. A similar amendment sponsored by Mike Pence

(R-IN) was introduced in the House for H.R. 3289, which would make half of the \$20 billion a loan with no conditions. It was ruled out of order.

President Bush has expressed his strong opposition to any of the reconstruction funds being given as a loan. His Statement of Administration Policy (SAP) is unequivocal. This week the House and Senate will try to negotiate their differences in an attempt to finalize the appropriation before an international donor conference in Madrid on Thursday. It is not clear whether the Senate will be successful in retaining the loan provision, or whether the President would veto the bill if it contained any loan provisions at all.

Meanwhile only three appropriations bills for fiscal year 2004, which started September 1, 2003, have been signed into law - Homeland Security, Defense, and Legislative Branch. The rest of the government is running on a continuing resolution (CR) that temporarily funds it through October 31, 2003. There are very few legislative days remaining until then and the emergency supplemental request for Iraq and Afghanistan will likely take up most of this week. It is also likely that Congress will pass yet another CR to fund government, and a number of the remaining appropriations bills will be combined into one omnibus bill.

OMB Watch Goes on the Road with a State-by-State Analysis of the Estate Tax and Charitable Giving

OMB Watch's John Irons is on the road to promote a new study that details state-by-state analysis of charitable losses from the estate tax repeal.

From October 14 through October 24, Irons will be traveling the country to speak on the effects of estate tax repeal on charitable giving as well as the need to retain the estate tax as part of an overall fair tax system.

Americans for a Fair Estate Tax, United for a Fair Economy, the Fair Taxes for All coalition, and their local affiliates have organized the tour. Successful events were held in Portland, Oregon on Oct. 15; Seattle, Washington on the 16th; and Portland, Maine on the 20th. Events are forthcoming in Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio on the 21st; Indianapolis, Indiana on the 22nd; Baton Rouge, Louisiana on the 23rd; and Little Rock, Arkansas on the 24th.

During the tour, OMB Watch is releasing a new report showing the effects of estate tax repeal on charitable

contributions in each state. The state-by-state report follows on the recent [analysis](#) of the estate tax repeal by the Brookings Institute, which details the significant negative impact on charitable giving and totals a nationwide reduction through bequests and lifetime giving by approximately \$10 billion annually. Using state-level data on charitable revenue, the new OMB Watch report estimates the state-by-state loss in charitable giving that would result from a full elimination of the estate tax. On average, states would lose \$187 million in annual charitable giving.

The local estate tax briefings also discuss broader implications of estate tax repeal. The National Priorities Project has prepared a report called the Trillion Dollar Diversion, which describes the broader impact on state programs if the estate tax is repealed.

For information on events in your area, email [estatetax-tour](#) or [taylore](#) or call 202.234.8494.

Passage of the CARE Act Remains Uncertain

A CARE Act update.

As [reported](#) earlier in the Watcher, the future of the CARE Act on charitable giving continues to remain in limbo in spite of the fact that both congressional chambers have passed a version of the bill. The CARE Act provides tax incentives to increase charitable giving by individuals and companies to both faith-based and secular social service groups, and is fairly uncontroversial. However, major stumbling blocks to bringing the bill to conference remain, including:

- Sen. Olympia Snowe (R-ME) proposed amendment that would attach an extension of the child tax credit to low-income families to the bill. House Republican leaders are adamantly opposed to the expansion of the child tax credit, unless the child tax credit also includes higher income families - which under the original tax bill are scheduled to sunset.
- The Senate version of the Act includes a provision for an additional \$1.3 billion for the Social Services Block Grant (SSGB). The House bill includes no additional funds for the SSGB.
- The Senate version offsets the cost of the bill (including the expanded child tax credit) by extending US Custom user fees, while the House version includes additional tax expenditures with no offsets.

Because of the strong differences between the House and Senate version of the CARE Act over the above items, getting the bills to conference and negotiating these differences seems to be a long shot. To add to the challenge, Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), has put a “hold” on the legislation because of some of the tax extenders in the bill, particularly one dealing with pensions. Other Democrats may use the CARE Act to protest being excluded from conferences on other legislation.

Internet Taxation and the State Fiscal Picture

The extension of the Internet services' sales tax ban is due to expire November 1. However concerns remain, especially given the dire fiscal straits of most states. Besides making the ban permanent, the definition of the services that would be exempt from taxation is being expanded. The proposal under consideration also eliminates a "grandfather" clause that allowed state and local sales taxes on Internet access to continue in eleven states. See the new [report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities \(CBPP\)](#).

JOB WATCH

For monthly updates of state-by-state job trends, current labor market trends, and tracking of job growth measured against the number of jobs the Bush administration said would be created by its 2003 tax cut proposal; tune into the Economic Policy Institute's [Job Watch](#). A wealth of useful charts and graphs are provided. You can also sign up for Job Watch bulletins by email.

Texas Attorney General's Ruling Undermines Public Access

On Oct. 6 the Texas Attorney General rejected the Sunshine Project's request for access to University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) records under the Texas Public Information Act. This decision prohibits the public from accessing information regarding human health and environmental damages that might result from IBC's research on biological weapons agents. The Sunshine Project has been seeking information on the committee's membership, policies, meetings and decisions for over a year. UTMB contends these documents contain intellectual property and are so sensitive that a judge may not view them.

The IBC was established under federal National Institutes of Health (NIH) Guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant DNA Molecules and the committee reviews and approves the use of biological agents on the UTMB campus. The NIH guidelines for research safety mandates public access to the minutes of IBC meetings, requires a mechanism for public commentary on IBC decisions, and encourages UTMB to open its IBC meetings to the public. Under the Texas Public Information Act, there are no exemptions that would prohibit disclosure of the material requested.

Despite the NIH guidelines and Public Information Act's provisions for information access, the Attorney General ruled in favor of UTMB and allowed a secrecy provision under the Texas Health and Safety Code to trump the state information access law. Because the IBC is designated as a "medical committee," under the Texas Health and Safety Code the IBC can keep any documents secret and is immune to judicial subpoena. It is unclear if the federal guidelines could overrule the state law. NIH is currently investigating UTMB's compliance with the guidelines.

The Sunshine Project is an international non-governmental organization that works on biological weapons issues. The organization filed the information request to ensure the committee's biodefense work does not threaten arms control treaties or endanger communities neighboring the biodefense research.

Edward Hammond, Director of the Sunshine project, believes that UTMB's affinity for secrecy "will erode public confidence in the safety and security of biodefense research in Texas and across the country." Hammond also points to the precedent that this ruling could set for future university actions, saying "UTMB could create a committee for any purpose, for example, to produce offensive bioweapons or to waste biodefense dollars and, under Texas law, the records of that committee would not be available to the public, not even to a court."

EPA Releases Final ECHO Database

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has completed the pilot phase of its Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) website. EPA finalized the site after reviewing extensive feedback received on the pilot version from the general public, public interest groups, government users, trade associations and regulated entities.

ECHO is an Internet tool developed and maintained by the EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance (OECA) and provides access to facility-level compliance and enforcement information for approximately 800,000 regulated facilities nationwide. The data included within ECHO has previously been publicly available, but not in one searchable online format.

The ECHO site also includes EPA's response to the comments received during its public comment period plus statistics on site use, error notifications and error responses during this time. The pilot ECHO site generated thousands of errors reports, many of which resulted in information correction. This clearly shows the value of online access in ensuring accurate data. Users may continue to submit error notifications using an error-reporting feature.

To learn more about the ECHO database, visit EPA's site at <http://epa.gov/echo/> and read OMB Watch's article on the ECHO feedback meeting.

Ohio Bill Prohibits Access to Health Information

The Ohio Senate Finance Committee voted in favor of a bill that allows the Ohio Department of Health to hide information from the public during health department investigations. The provisions were part of Ohio State Senate's bioterrorism legislation (S 6) aimed at improving response to public health emergencies in the event of a biological terrorism attack.

The Republican backed bill changed an Ohio law that previously classified pending health department investigations into businesses as public records, granting access to anyone. Under the law information identifying individuals was protected from disclosure. The new provisions change the word "person" in the Ohio Revised Code so it is interpreted as not only an individual, but also a business or corporation.

This allows businesses facing investigations for public health violations to remain secret from the public until the investigation is over. For example, if a restaurant were in violation of health codes and under inquiry, the public would not be notified and the health of the restaurant patrons could be at risk.

A coalition of environmental, public interest and media groups fought to keep the previous laws in place, asserting no evidence existed to indicate past problems with the law. Supporters of the bill contend that they do not want to alarm the public with unfounded information, and therefore need secrecy during the investigation. Additionally, they feel that businesses will be more cooperative with investigators if they are shielded from public scrutiny. Jodi Govern, general counsel of the health department, argues that businesses could incur damages by the generation of negative publicity.

The changes in law appear to use bioterrorism as a means to usher in pro-business language offering them protections at the expense of public health.

Scientists Advise Self-Censorship

In an effort to avoid a system of government-imposed secrecy, a National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel recently recommended biologists engage in a system of self-censorship. The panel advocated a process of review, at the university and federal levels, for research that could help terrorists make biological weapons.

While the proposal represents a major and troubling concession by the scientific community to security concerns, the Bush administration may still enforce its own restrictions. John H. Marburger, science adviser to President Bush, suggested that the panel's recommendations might not be enough.

The NAS panel proposed seven areas of biology that should be reviewed by both local and federal committees. The local committees could prevent experiments at their facilities, and the federal committee could cut off federal funding of an experiment. The panel's recommendation would also allow the government to make any research secret and therefore prevent publication. In theory, the government would not want to overuse this power in areas such as immunology and virology because of the delays it would cause in research to prevent or cure various illnesses. However, the panel's report does not contain any safeguards against the possible overuse of government secrecy.

If the Bush administration supports the panel's proposal, it is unclear whether it would require Congressional action and oversight or if it could be established by executive order.

FEC Says Donor Lists Cannot be Used for Sending Educational Materials

In June the National Center for Tobacco-Free Kids (NCTFK) asked the Federal Election Commission (FEC) for an Advisory Opinion (AO) on whether it can use donor information from the FEC database to target educational mailings. NCTFK is a nonpartisan organization exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the tax code. The FEC went against the recommendation of its General Counsel and denied the request.

AO 2003-24 was approved at the October 9 meeting of the FEC. It interprets 2 U.S.C. 438(a)(4) and 11 CFR 104.15, which prohibit use of information from FEC reports for any commercial purpose, solicitation or fundraising, as “a broad prophylactic measure intended to protect the privacy of the contributors.” Although NCTFK had said it would strictly limit its mailings to educational information, the FEC said such mailings “present the possibility of repetitive and intrusive communications to contributors.”

The General Counsel had recommended allowing general educational communications, as well as grassroots lobbying appeals. However, they recommended that such mailings not include information about how to sign up for further communications, since that would likely lead to future fundraising solicitation. NCTFK said it would code responses to ensure the contacts did not receive future solicitations.

The Campaign Legal Center submitted a letter urging the FEC to recognize clear boundaries set by the law, citing past Advisory Opinions that said the prohibition on using FEC donor information only extends to fundraising or commercial purposes.

FEC Advisory Opinions only apply to the organization requesting them, but are often used as guidance by groups in similar situations.

New Resources Can Help Nonprofits Get Out the Vote

Nonprofits can significantly increase civic participation and reinvigorate democracy in America by simply registering people to vote. Some nonprofits are using local voter databases to cross-reference their membership lists in order to target their registration efforts more effectively. It can even help raise money for nonprofits: Working Assets has kicked off a campaign to register one million new voters by paying nonprofits for each new voter registered.

Thanks to the National Voter Registration Act, known as the "motor voter" law, registering to vote is more convenient than ever before. A nonprofit can register members online or in the field with a national standard form (a few states are exempt). Registering citizens to vote is totally permissible under IRS rules for a 501(c)(3) organization, as long as voters are targeted in a neutral way. The best place for a nonprofit organization to start is with their members.

Cross-referencing your membership lists with a voter database is a great way to find out which of your members are not yet registered. Voter databases, also known as voter files, are kept at local county election offices. Some states have statewide databases within the Secretary of State's office or their Election Board. Most states also have a vendor who manages and sells the voter files for the state. Some of the large groups that do this are: Blaemire Associates, ABT Associates, Aristotle, Labels and Lists. An organization can ask their allies and friends to get involved in getting out the vote as well. This way the groups can share the costs of the voter files, and reach more people in their community.

Another way to get people to register to vote is through your organization's outreach activities or web site. Working Assets recently kicked-off a campaign to register one million voters. In order reach their goal, they are enlisting nonprofits to work with them. Working Assets will pay nonprofits for each voter registration form filled out either online or in the field. They have dedicated one percent of their total revenue to funding nonpartisan voter registration efforts, in addition to the one percent already dedicated to funding nonprofits. For more information on Working Assets' campaign contact field organizer, Becky Bond, at bbond@workingassets.com, 415/369-2107 (online registrations) or Sarah Clusen Buecher, sbuecher@wafs.com, 415/369-2127 (field registrations).

There was a time in our nation's history when barriers limited citizen access to the voting booth. Today, after the hard work and sacrifice of many Americans and nonprofit organizations, all citizens are guaranteed the right to have their voices heard. These precious rights are only of value if citizens take time to exercise them. The nonprofit sector is in a unique position to activate our communities to exercise these rights by getting people registered to vote. These efforts can be incorporated into our day-to-day work and do not require significant

additional resources.

For more information on nonpartisan activities that 501(c)(3)'s can engage in see OMB Watch's document on Legal Rules for Voter Education and GOTV by 501(c)(3) Groups.

Administration Issues Watered-Down Food Import Rules

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently issued watered-down standards requiring food importers to provide advanced notice of shipments bound for the United States.

The standards were mandated by the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002, which was passed in response to concerns about terrorist attacks on the nation's food supply.

Industry representatives met with officials from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), which reviews and must approve all major rules, on numerous occasions in what appears to have been a successful effort to weaken the prior notice requirements. The original proposal, issued in February for public comment, required importers to notify the FDA by noon the day before a shipment was to arrive. The final standards, however, require just eight hours notice for shipments arriving by sea, four hours for those transported by air or rail, and only two hours for shipments coming by land.

"These regulations are critically needed to protect the food supply, but we're concerned that the agency is requiring less advance notice for imported food shipments," said Caroline Smith DeWaal of the Center for Science in the Public Interest. "If trucks of food can arrive at our borders with just two hours notice, it might be easier for someone to avoid inspection."

FDA also issued standards requiring facilities that manufacture, process, pack or store food to register with the agency. Both rules take effect December 12.

Whistleblower Says OSHA Blocked Testing of Inspectors Exposed to Toxic Metal

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has refused to provide blood tests to 500 current and former inspectors who may have been exposed to beryllium, a highly toxic metal, despite recommendations from scientific and medical staff, according to an agency regional administrator.

In a statement filed with the Office of Special Counsel, Adam Finkel, OSHA administrator for the Rocky Mountain region, alleges that the agency failed to order blood tests that can help diagnose chronic beryllium disease (CBD) -- a progressive and typically fatal lung disease -- up to 10 years before symptoms appear. Individuals can contract CBD after extremely low exposures of beryllium, and more than 500 inspectors and retirees may have been exposed to the metal while inspecting workplaces, according to the complaint.

Finkel claims that in March 2001 scientific and medical staff briefed OSHA officials, recommending that the agency adopt a pilot program for testing inspectors who had been exposed to beryllium, yet no action was taken. More than a year later, in April 2002, Assistant Labor Secretary John Henshaw convened an OSHA Executive Board meeting at which the beryllium issue was to be discussed. However, Henshaw cut the discussion short, announcing that OSHA:

- Would not offer testing to retired inspectors;
- Would not explain to former inspectors why they might want to receive the test or tell them where to seek help; and
- Would not offer testing to active inspectors but might in the future, as part of regular medical examinations provided to inspectors every three years.

“OSHA is supposed to be setting appropriate workplace health standards yet it is failing to take the prudent steps required to protect its own inspectors from a lethal lung disease,” commented Jeffrey Ruch, executive director of Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). Ruch noted that OSHA recently spent more money on consultants and focus groups to develop its new slogan -- “Safety and Health Add Value” -- than it would cost to test all exposed inspectors.

The OSC must rule on the merits of Finkel's disclosure within 15 working days. If the office determines that there is a substantial likelihood of wrongdoing it will oversee an investigation by the secretary of Labor.

Administration Lifts Restrictions for Dumping Mining Waste

The Bush administration recently announced it is ending a Clinton-era policy that restricted the amount of public land mining companies can use for dumping waste.

In 1997, John Leshy, then solicitor of the Department of Interior (DOI), issued an opinion that limited each 20-acre mining claim to one five-acre "mill site" for dumping and other support operations. Roderick E. Walston, DOI's deputy solicitor, overturned this opinion Oct. 7, concluding there is no limit to the number of five-acre mill sites that each 20-acre mining claim can use. DOI also issued a final rule to implement the new opinion.

The administration's reversal "puts clean water and community health at increased risk, with an open invitation to dump massive quantities of toxic mining waste on unlimited amounts of our public lands," remarked Steve D'Esposito of the Mineral Policy Center.

State Tour Scheduled for EPA's Draft Report on the Environment

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently announced it will hold five public meetings across the U.S. to hear comments on the "Draft Report on the Environment" and discuss the future of the project.

The draft report, released June 23, is the end product of a two-year assessment of the current state of the environment and human health and is a part of EPA's "Environmental Indicators Initiative." This initiative aims to improve EPA's ability to use data to evaluate environmental conditions and their impact on human health and natural resources. The draft report addresses the state of the environment in the U.S. and where gaps in research and information exist.

The meetings will be held in Chicago on Nov. 6, Atlanta on Nov. 13, San Francisco on Nov. 18, Seattle on Nov. 29, and Dallas on Dec. 12. The agency hopes a wide range of stakeholders will provide feedback on the first report and assist in setting a course for improved future reports. Specifically, EPA is looking for information on the use of the report in decision-making processes; improvements in indicators or additional indicators; and the quality and overall structure of the report. EPA has not yet announced exact locations and times.

Read a June 30 OMB Watch article on the draft report.

Pentagon Puts Public Papers Back Online

The Department of Defense returned a large collection of unclassified policy directives to its web site, Secrecy News reported on Oct. 16.

According to the Associated Press, the Defense Department documents in question included papers that explained department policy on conscientious objectors, displaying flags, and hundreds of other unclassified materials.

Public oversight helped the Defense Department to rethink this instance of secrecy. Secrecy News earlier this month called attention to the removal of the documents. On October 13, The Memory Hole web site posted the removed documents to their web site.

Secrecy News is a highly respected publication of the Federation of American Scientists and is written by Steven Aftergood.

Supreme Court Is Asked to Hear a Case on Government Secrecy

The Center for National Security Studies has asked the Supreme Court to decide whether the government rightfully kept secret the names of individuals arrested after September 11.

The United States Circuit Court for the District of Columbia ruled earlier this year (See Secrecy Wins in Court, But Excesses Exposed, Watcher, 6/30/03) that the courts should defer to the executive branch when intelligence agencies invoke national security to justify government secrecy. At issue was the government's refusal to release the names of those detained in government investigations. The government claims that releasing the names, which had been requested by the Center for National Security Studies and numerous press groups under the Freedom of Information Act, would have undermined ongoing investigations of planned terrorist attacks.

A Larger Sunset Proposed for Patriot Act

Several Senators troubled with the shroud of secrecy the government has put around its use of expanded surveillance powers granted under the US Patriot Act have proposed expanding the number of Patriot Act provisions that will automatically expire.

Sens. Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Larry Craig (R-ID), Richard Durbin (D-IL), John Sununu (R-NH), and Harry Reid (D-NV) recently introduced the Patriot Oversight Restoration Act of 2003 (S. 1695) to the Senate. The bill would expand the US Patriot Act's "sunset" provision.

When the Patriot Act was originally proposed, some members of Congress were concerned about the new powers

it granted the government. Advocates of the legislation justified these powers as temporary measures needed to jump-start an effort to fight terrorism. The sunset provision was included so that after five years several of the act's provisions would expire. The new legislation proposes to apply the sunset provision to more than a dozen additional powers.

The bill formalizes a significant shift in attitude toward the Patriot Act. Previously, there had been talk in Congress of actually eliminating the sunset provision and making all of the new powers permanent.

The bill "will allow Congress to re-examine some of the important legal issues that abruptly confronted us in the weeks following September 11, and to re-assess our efforts with the benefit of hindsight and the luxury of time," explained Leahy.

Ideas Wanted for 10 Most Wanted Government Docs

We are looking for a few good documents--the Ten Most Wanted government documents for 2004, to be precise. And we're hoping you, as an expert in this area, can help.

As part of an effort to fight increased government secrecy, we would like your help in identifying:

- (1) the ten or twenty government documents -- or categories of documents -- you would most like to see the government make available to the public
- (2) problems you have faced finding government information

Send your ideas to info@openthegovernment.org. Examples of the Ten Most Wanted government documents for 2004 may include:

- The 28 pages kept classified from the report by Congress on the September 11 attacks
- Risks to communities posed by chemical plants and efforts to make plants safer
- Taxpayer-funded Congressional Research Service reports available to the public only through members of Congress
- Federal contracts for goods and services paid for with taxpayer dollars
- Local government spending for each of the 50 states

It doesn't matter what the topic is; if you're interested in it, chances are others are, too.

We will cull through your ideas, make a list of the 20 or more best ideas, and ask the public to vote on which documents they most want the government to make available to them. We will publicly announce the results and push the government to release those documents.

Who We Are and Why We're Doing This

The Ten Most Wanted Project of 2004 is being prepared by OMB Watch and the Center for Democracy and Technology for OpenTheGovernment.org. OpenTheGovernment.org is a new, unprecedented coalition of over 30 organizations created to fight increased secrecy and promote open government. The Center for Democracy and Technology (CDT) works to promote democratic values and civil liberties in the digital age. OMB Watch works to advance social justice, government accountability and citizen participation in federal policy decisions.

If the Ten Most Wanted Project of 2004 sounds familiar to you, it should. When the Center for Democracy and Technology and OMB Watch conducted the 10 Most Wanted survey a few years ago (in 1999), we came up with good results. At that time, the Supreme Court did not have a web site (but Mongolia's Supreme Court did). By the 2000 election, the new U.S. Supreme Court Web site was ready to handle the heavy demand to download the Bush v. Gore decision, allowing thousands from around the world to read the decisions for themselves at the time that it was published. In another victory, the government's plans to recover endangered species were not available online. After the 10 Most Wanted survey, resources were made available to step up the time frame to get these important documents online.

Today, the problems are bigger, and our response will be bigger as well. We have broadened the range of information the Ten Most Wanted Project will cover. The Ten Most Wanted Project of 2004 will help launch a broad national coalition called OpenTheGovernment.org to return our government to a commitment of openness. Both OMB Watch and CDT participate in the coalition.

To start, though, we need a good list.

It's simple. It's quick. And it'll help open the government.

Deadline: Friday, October 24, 2003

Respond via email to: info@openthegovernment.org



© 2001 OMB Watch
1742 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009
202-234-8494 (phone)
202-234-8584 (fax)
ombwatch@ombwatch.org