

September 6, 2006

An Open Letter to Majority Leader Frist: Bring S. 2590 to the Floor for a Vote!

Dear Majority Leader Frist:

On behalf of the millions of taxpaying citizens represented by the groups signed below, we strongly urge you to bring S. 2590, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act, to the Senate floor for a vote. The bill, sponsored by Senators Tom Coburn (R-OK) and Barack Obama (D-IL), would direct the Office of Management and Budget to create a publicly-available website that would list every entity receiving federal financial assistance, such as grants or contracts, and the totals awarded for each fiscal year. Such a website would entail very little cost and would greatly increase transparency in the distribution of government funding. At last, those who most deserve to know about this process – the American people – would have a tool to examine and evaluate the federal government’s funding decisions and priorities.

And yet, after being “hotlined” for unanimous passage, the bill was suddenly derailed when a secret hold was placed, indicating a Senator would object to it on the floor. After weeks of investigation, ordinary citizens used phone calls and several websites to narrow the holds down to Senators Ted Stevens (R-AK) and Robert Byrd (D-WV). Both Senators then admitted publicly to the holds. And yet, Stevens has renewed his hold and, along with an anonymous Democrat, stands in the way of this common-sense legislation.

This unprecedented flurry of “outside the Beltway” action from across the political spectrum suggests that support for this bill is strong among the general public. Advocates from all ideological points of view share the common notion that transparency of and public access to government information is vital to the health of our political system. Through letters such as this one, over 110 groups – of all ideological persuasions – have conveyed to the Senate their strong support for this measure.

Citizens should no longer be forced to navigate the confusing labyrinth of bureaucracy just to find out how their tax dollars are spent. Furthermore, internal conflicts and parliamentary maneuvers should not prevent the passage of a bill with such widespread support. Americans of all political stripes have spoken with a unified voice in favor of transparency and accountability. Now, they call upon you to bring S. 2590 to the Senate floor for a vote as soon as possible.

We thank you for your public commitments to bring this bill to the floor and want to work with you to ensure this important legislation receives a straightforward vote when the Senate reconvenes.

Sincerely,

John Berthoud
President
National Taxpayers Union

Gary D. Bass
Executive Director
OMB Watch

Ashok Mehan
ADEZZA Federal Consulting

Emily Ferry
Executive Director
Alaska Transportation Priorities Project

J. William Lauderback
Executive Vice President
The American Conservative Union

Scott Barstow
Director of Public Policy
American Counseling Association

Darryl Fagin
Legislative Director
Americans for Democratic Action

Mary Alice Baish
Washington Affairs Representative
American Association of Law Libraries

Helena R. Berger
Chief Operating Officer
American Association of People with
Disabilities

Dr. Jane Orient
Executive Director
American Association of Physicians and
Surgeons

F. Patricia Callahan
President and General Counsel
American Association of Small Property
Owners

Lynne Bradley
Director of Government Relations
American Libraries Association

Kevin Goldberg
American Society of Newspaper Editors

Tim Phillips
President
Americans for Prosperity

Timothy Wise
President
Arlington County Taxpayers Association

Richard Karpel
Executive Director
Association of Alternative News Weeklies

Prue Adler
Associate Executive Director
Association of Research Libraries

Bruce Martin
Secretary
Buddhists for Fair Taxation

Peter Scheer
Executive Director
California First Amendment Coalition

Terry Francke
General Counsel
Californians Aware

Charlie Cray
Director
Center for Corporate Policy

Ari Schwartz
Deputy Director
Center for Democracy and Technology

J. Bradley Jansen
Director
Center for Financial Privacy and Human
Rights

Jeffrey Mazzella
President
Center for Individual Freedom

Robert E. Wordlaw
Executive Director
Chicago Jobs Council

Barbara Anderson
Executive Director
Citizens for Limited Taxation

Doug Bandow
Vice President of Policy
Citizen Outreach

Debbie Weinstein
Executive Director
Coalition on Human Needs

Chellie Pingree
President and CEO
Common Cause

Lawrence G. Sandoval
Staff Representative
Communication Workers of America

Keith Runyon
President Pro Tem
Concerned United Taxpayers

Naomi E. Shaiken
President
Connecticut Call to Action

Howard Phillips
Chairman
The Conservative Caucus, Inc

Bob Shavelson
Cook Inletkeeper (AK)

Thomas Schatz
President
Council for Citizens Against Government
Waste

John Isaacs
President
Council for a Livable World

Edward J. Spar
Executive Director
Council of Professional Associations on
Federal Statistics

Jim Babka
President
DownsizeDC.org

Phyllis Schlafly
President and Founder
Eagle Forum

John Richard
Essential Information

John McLaughry
President
Ethan Allen Institute

Bob Williams
President
Evergreen Freedom Foundation

Steven Aftergood
Director
Federation of American Scientists

Erich Pica
Director, Domestic Program
Friends of the Earth

Tom Devine
Legal Director
Government Accountability Project

Richard O. Rowland
President
Grassroot Institute of Hawaii

Rick Hind
Legislative Director
Greenpeace

Jon Coupal
President
Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

Kevin McLaughlin
President
Iowans for Discounted Taxes

Michael D. Ostrolenk
National Director
Liberty Coalition

Patrick Sammon
Executive Vice President
Log Cabin Republicans

Maria Powell
Madison Environmental Justice Organization

Richard Falknor
Executive Vice President
Maryland Taxpayers Association

Forest Thigpen
President
Mississippi Center for Public Policy

Charles Davis
Executive Director
National Freedom of Information Coalition

Greg Speeter
Executive Director
National Priorities Project

Doug Kagan
Chairman
Nebraska Taxpayers for Freedom

Marge Clark, BVM
Lobbyist
NETWORK: National Catholic Social Justice
Lobby

Joel Kupferman
Executive Director
New York Environmental Law & Justice
Project

Michael Mariotte
Executive Director
Nuclear Information and Resource Service

Patrice McDermott
Director
OpenTheGovernment.org

Bob Barr
Chairman
Patriots to Restore Checks and Balances

Marjorie A. Parker
Peace Coalition of Southern Illinois

Monica Moore
Program Director
Pesticide Action Network North America
Regional Center

James A. Landrith, Jr.
Founder
Pious Pagan Publishing

Danielle Brian
Executive Director
Project on Government Oversight

Timothy J. Schmaltz
Coordinator/CEO
Protecting Arizona's Family Coalition

Peter Suber
Open Access Project Director
Public Knowledge

Lucy Dalglish
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press

William Westmiller
Chairman
Republican Liberty Caucus

Paul Gessing
President
Rio Grande Foundation

Nick Sauvie
Executive Director
ROSE Community Development (OR)

Kathy Burns
Sciencecorps

Ellen Miller
Executive Director
Sunlight Foundation

Steve Ellis
Vice President of Programs
Taxpayers for Common Sense Action

David Strom
President
Taxpayers League of Minnesota

Rick Durham
President
Tennessee Tax Revolt, Inc

John Chelen
President
Unison Institute

Jeff Blum
Executive Director
US Action

Dane von Breichenruchardt
Executive Director
U.S. Bill of Rights Foundation

Ed Mierzwinski
Consumer Program Director
U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Craig Gillette
VelvetRevolution.us

Rose Bogaert
Chair
Wayne County Taxpayers Association, Inc

Sylvia G. Ray
Executive Director
Women's Center of Fayetteville (AR)