



2008 Work Plan

Ensuring a Regulatory Framework that Protects the Public and Safeguards Society

OMB Watch strives to counter a decades-long shift by the federal government away from its responsibilities to provide for the general welfare and protect our shared resources while also promoting the positive role of government. Our long-term goals are to fight the shifts toward limited government, an increasingly imperial presidency, and inappropriate devolution of federal responsibilities to states. More immediately, we seek to restore, protect, and advance public protections in health, safety, civil rights, civil liberties, and the environment; and to develop, analyze, and disseminate information on activities by governmental, public, and private sector groups affecting public protections. Our main focus is on procedural matters that cut across federal agency boundaries.

2008 Work Plan Includes:

1. Develop Recommendations for the Next U.S. President and Congress on Ways to Improve the Regulatory Process at the Federal Level
 - ✚ Chair a Steering Committee that will review and make final recommendations
 - ✚ Organize four task forces to develop papers and ideas for recommendations
 - ✚ Conduct public opinion research as needed to understand the public's viewpoints on regulatory matters
2. Educate the Public About the Regulatory Process
 - ✚ Issue a series of articles on regulatory problems and process trends
 - ✚ Publish a comprehensive report on the Bush regulatory track record, providing comparisons with past administrations
 - ✚ Create and maintain an online regulatory resource center to help the public understand the federal regulatory process
3. Continue Watchdogging Government Agencies with Regulatory Oversight
 - ✚ Monitor the activities of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and other oversight agencies
 - ✚ Track implementation of regulatory executive orders and other policies
 - ✚ Promote e-rulemaking initiatives
4. Oppose Rollbacks in Regulatory Protections and Advocate for Improvements
 - ✚ Lead Citizens for Sensible Safeguards coalitional activities
 - ✚ Top priorities include stopping:
 - ❖ The erosion of the integrity of science
 - ❖ Sunset commissions or other strategies to kill regulations and agencies
 - ❖ Adding more unnecessary agency analysis
 - ❖ Changes that give corporate interests an unfair advantage over the public in rulemakings

Celebrating 20 years: Promoting Government Accountability and Citizen Participation - 1983 - 2003.

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Making Government More Transparent and Accountable

The public's right to know is a core democratic principle that has been increasingly eroding. In response, OMB Watch seeks to establish a policy framework at the federal level that makes government information more accessible and useable to the public – and counters trends toward secrecy. This includes advocating for federal agencies to affirmatively disseminate information, thereby making laws such as the Freedom of Information Act vehicles of last resort instead of first resort. We also advocate for use of tools that make it easier for the public to search, find, and obtain government information, as well as efforts to improve the quality of such information.

2008 Work Plan Includes:

1. Develop Recommendations for the Next U.S. President to Improve Government Transparency
 - ✚ Host forums – face-to-face and online – to get input on moving the federal government into the 21st century
 - ✚ Work with a trans-partisan coalition to identify:
 - ❖ Policy changes that the next president and Congress should make
 - ❖ Ways of improving usability of government information
 - ✚ Begin a campaign to promote adoption of recommendations developed for next administration and Congress
 - ✚ Encourage other organizations to inject transparency issues into presidential and congressional election debates, and to call for a transparency pledge
 - ✚ Encourage greater congressional oversight on government transparency
2. Protect and Improve Data on Environmental Health
 - ✚ Undo EPA's rule that rolled back reporting requirements under the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI)
 - ✚ Identify recommendations for the next president on strengthening the TRI program and information access at EPA
 - ✚ Work with other state and national groups to identify and begin to advocate for the next generation right-to-know program, such as one addressing greenhouse gas reporting
3. Advocate for Improved Security and Transparency in this Country's Chemical Plants
 - ✚ Support legislative and regulatory approaches to improve security at chemical plants, reduce vulnerabilities, and provide accountability by ensuring that actions are taken by chemical companies to make communities safer
4. Minimize the Growing Use of Pseudo-Classification and other Forms of Secrecy
 - ✚ Work with other national organizations to reduce government secrecy
5. Improve upon FedSpending.org and RTKNET.org, two OMB Watch Websites Providing Government Data
 - ✚ Redesign RTK NET and update databases
 - ✚ Improve search capability on FedSpending.org
 - ✚ Add new databases to FedSpending.org
 - ✚ Add new features to FedSpending.org to help the public monitor information about good and bad things the government has been funding

Promoting Fiscal Accountability, Performance, and Fairness

Federal tax and spending policies are a reflection of our national priorities. OMB Watch hopes to change these priorities to value investing in our future: spending more on meeting public needs and strengthening economic growth – and doing so in a fiscally responsible manner. We also hope our actions contribute to restoring trust in government, as we believe government is an important vehicle in serving and protecting the common good. Finally, we support efforts that will lead to increased accountability and better public understanding of how government delivers services and generally carries out its work.

2008 Work Plan Includes:

1. Advocate for Fair, Responsible Tax Policies
 - ✚ Preserve the estate tax
 - ✚ Oppose the extension of the Bush tax cuts and support tax fairness
 - ✚ Promote Alternative Minimum Tax reform
 - ✚ Advocate for pay-as-you-go compliance
2. Support Responsible Efforts to Manage the Economy
3. Assess and Support Improved Tools for Government Performance
 - ✚ Develop recommendations for next president on performance measurement
 - ✚ Report on agency performance activities, including resources for regulatory work
4. Slow the Growth of Government Privatization and Improve Contracting
 - ✚ Advocate for new laws and regulations requiring more disclosure of information about contracts and grants in order to hold contractors more accountable
 - ✚ Monitor OMB's implementation of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act
 - ✚ Advocate for termination of IRS privatized debt collection program
 - ✚ Develop recommendations for the next president on strengthening contractor responsibility

Strengthening Civil Society and Democracy

A democracy thrives when its citizens are actively engaged in decisions that affect them. OMB Watch's long-term goals are to find ways to encourage public participation in governmental decision making and to level the playing field so that all have equal access and say. A large portion of our work is targeted to the nonprofit sector because if nonprofits get more involved in governmental decisions, we believe it will have a salutary effect. This is because so many Americans are connected to nonprofits – as employees, volunteers, or contributors. Prior to 9/11, most of our work focused advocacy and voter engagement rights of nonprofits. Since 9/11, we have broadened our work to address the erosion of constitutional protections that affect the work of nonprofits and the people they serve.

2008 Work Plan Includes:

1. Encourage Nonpartisan Voter Engagement
 - ✚ Begin a two-year effort to identify an alternative framework to “facts and circumstances” regulations for nonprofit nonpartisan voter engagement
 - ✚ Work with other groups to encourage voter participation in elections
 - ✚ Upgrade our website to provide Help America Vote Act resources and examples of nonprofit voter engagement activities
2. Protect Nonprofit Speech Rights
 - ✚ Oppose legislative or regulatory proposals that limit nonprofit advocacy, including efforts to disclose charity donors
 - ✚ Publish manual on nonprofit advocacy, focused on groups that receive federal funds
 - ✚ Monitor and act on IRS and FEC electioneering regulations and enforcement if they impact issue advocacy, including possible lawsuits
3. Promote Nonprofit Policy Engagement
 - ✚ Promote findings from our *Seen but not Heard: Strengthening Nonprofit Advocacy* book published in 2007
 - ✚ Redesign NPAction.org website and partner with other groups to expand content and use
 - ✚ Explore ways of improving communications with federal government leaders
 - ✚ Monitor implementation of the new federal lobbying and ethics law
4. Protect Constitutional Rights of Charities and the People they Serve
 - ✚ Develop campaign to reform rights under anti-terrorism policies, including due process rights
 - ✚ Advocate for release of seized charity funds for legitimate charitable purposes
 - ✚ Build improved partnerships with nonprofits, including international groups, to protect rights of groups and help reframe the debate from solely being a national security issue
 - ✚ Monitor the extent of government surveillance of nonprofits, track other proposals that might affect rights of nonprofits, and respond where appropriate
5. Inequality and Civic Participation
 - ✚ Help draw attention to the impact inequality has on civic participation