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## Work Plan: 2010

### Ensuring a Regulatory Framework that Protects the Public and Safeguards Society

OMB Watch's longer-term goal is to ensure that the government protects the public and the environment through its regulatory powers. Specifically, 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.

We expect 2010 to be dominated by changes in the regulatory process reflecting the Obama administration's priorities. In response, we will be prepared to analyze and assess the changes, as well as closely track regulatory activities in several agencies such as the Food and Drug Administration, Consumer Product Safety Commission, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. We will also advocate for a more responsive and transparent regulatory system.

#### 2010 Work Plan Includes:

1. Assess the Obama Administration's Regulatory Reforms
  - ✚ Plan for a mid-term assessment of Obama administration actions with interim assessments in 2010
  - ✚ Issue a series of reports covering regulatory enforcement, IRIS, scientific integrity, and regulatory performance in two to three agencies
2. Advocate for Changes in the Regulatory Process
  - ✚ Encourage Obama administration to incorporate recommendations from the Regulatory Reform project (<http://www.ombwatch.org/node/4196>)
  - ✚ Lobby for legislative improvements on topics such as the Federal Advisory Committee Act, Paperwork Reduction Act, and e-rulemaking (consistent with changes recommended in *Achieving the Potential: The Future of Federal e-Rulemaking*, an American Bar Association project)
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 directives, actions on scientific integrity, agency efforts under the Open Government Directive, and other policies
  - ✚ Follow the Obama administration's actions on Bush midnight regulations
4. Educate the Public About the Regulatory Process
  - ✚ Revise our Regulatory Resource Center (<http://www.ombwatch.org/regresources>), which provides tools and information to help the public understand the regulatory process, to reflect changes created by the Obama administration

## Making Government More Transparent and Accountable

The public's right to know is a core democratic principle and, some would argue, a basic human right. From the first day of his administration, President Obama promised a more transparent and participatory government that embraces 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies and policies. We have been working closely with the Obama administration and advocates across the political spectrum to implement recommendations from our *Moving Toward A 21st Century Right-To-Know Agenda: Recommendations to President-elect Obama and Congress*. At the same time, we continue to push the envelope on use of information technologies to advance public access in two areas: federal spending and environmental protections.

### 2010 Work Plan Includes:

1. Advocate for a More Transparent and Participatory Federal Government
  - ✚ Advocate for a government-wide affirmative disclosure requirement, expanding on the openness principles of FOIA to ensure that agencies have an obligation to proactively disclose information to the public
  - ✚ Track and, if needed, act on implementation of the Open Government Directive and other Obama administration policies regarding government openness to promote the public's right to know
  - ✚ Encourage improved implementation of Obama administration's policies on FOIA
  - ✚ Assess the Obama administration's actions regarding government openness
2. Reduce Unnecessary National Security Secrecy
  - ✚ Work with Congress and the Obama administration on a revised regulatory framework for Controlled Unclassified Information
  - ✚ Advocate for oversight of Obama's state secrets policy
  - ✚ Monitor homeland security and national security policies to minimize secrecy, including classification, declassification, and reclassification policies
3. Improve Access to and Integrity of Federal Government Information
  - ✚ Promote use of interactive technologies within government to strengthen public access and citizen participation with special emphasis on providing the public with data visualization and analytical tools
  - ✚ Recommend ways the Obama administration can improve quality of information that is made available to the public
  - ✚ Advocate for the Obama administration to develop common identifiers, starting with corporate identifiers, to link disparate data sets
4. Advance Transparency on Environmental Health Issues
  - ✚ Coordinate a process for developing recommendations to the Obama administration for expending environmental health right to know, including next generation right-to-know programs, such as addressing greenhouse gas reporting
  - ✚ Advocate for expansion of and improvements to the Toxics Release Inventory
  - ✚ Advocate for a more limited use of confidential business information exemptions
  - ✚ Advocate for improved security and transparency in this country's chemical plants
  - ✚ Protect environmental information policies from industry and political interference
  - ✚ Maintain and improve OMB Watch's RTK NET website

## 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 by encouraging government to spend more on meeting public needs, invest in long-term growth, and strengthen the economy – and to do so in a fiscally responsible and socially equitable 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.

Efforts to stimulate the economy and create jobs will remain top priorities in 2010. For OMB Watch, we will continue our focus on financial transparency and accountability through online tools. We will also focus on improving contractor responsibility, strengthening performance measures, and preserving progressive taxes such as the estate tax.

### 2010 Work Plan Includes:

1. Advocate for Accountability in Bailouts, Financial Stimulus, and Other Spending
  - ✚ Publish analysis and commentary on the use of bailout and Recovery Act funds
  - ✚ Advocate for improved disclosure of Recovery Act spending and for proposals that help generate jobs with decent wages
  - ✚ Promote a message that tax expenditures are a hidden form of spending and explore opportunities for tax expenditure disclosure
  - ✚ Monitor and report on federal budget process
2. Advance Transparency on Federal Spending Issues
  - ✚ Work with the Obama administration on strengthening the USASpending.gov and Recovery.gov sites with an emphasis on improving data quality, including identifying the parent ownership of companies
  - ✚ Recommend a long-range strategy on federal spending transparency as required under the Open Government Directive
  - ✚ Building on FedSpending.org, develop a website and analytical tools that empower those working on social equity issues by combining data on spending, needs, and performance
3. Slow the Growth of Government Privatization and Improve Contractor Responsibility
  - ✚ Advocate for new laws and regulations requiring more disclosure of information about contracts and grants in order to hold contractors more accountable
  - ✚ Monitor contractor and contracting reforms
4. Advocate for Improved Tools on Government Performance
  - ✚ Work with the Obama administration and congressional oversight efforts on developing alternatives to the Program Assessment Rating Tool that emphasize results
  - ✚ Report on agency performance activities, including resources for regulatory work
5. Pursue Tax Policy Reforms
  - ✚ Continue chairing the Americans for Fair Estate Tax in order to preserve the estate tax and permanently reform it
  - ✚ Support progressive tax proposals
  - ✚ Monitor efforts to address short- and long-term debt issues

## 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.

OMB Watch has a long track record of protecting nonprofit advocacy rights. We will continue protecting these rights, but in 2010 will put special emphasis on clarify and expanding these rights. We will also encourage the Obama administration to promote policies and practices that limit the corrupting influence of money in executive branch decision making.

### 2010 Work Plan Includes:

1. Ensure Federal Law and Regulation Strengthens Speech Rights of Charities
  - ✚ Encourage administration to revisit its policy of treating all lobbyists the same (e.g., treating lobbyists for charities the same as those working for for-profit interests)
  - ✚ Monitor and, if needed, act on IRS, FEC, congressional, and judicial proposals that impact nonprofit advocacy, including implementation of federal lobbying and ethics laws and regulations
  - ✚ Promote a level playing field when it comes to special interest influences, particularly in the executive branch, starting with improved disclosure of attempts to influence federal spending
  - ✚ Advocate for removal of advocacy restrictions placed on grantees of the Legal Services Corporation
  - ✚ Host the Charity and Security Network, a project to reform nonprofit rights under anti-terrorism policies, including due process rights and release of seized charity funds for legitimate charitable purposes
2. Promote Nonprofit Policy Engagement
  - ✚ Reinvigorate the NPAction.org website by publishing new materials and redesigning the website to make it more functional and easier to use
  - ✚ Publish *Living with Federal Funds*, which describes lobbying and advocacy restrictions under federal grant rules.
3. Clarify and Expand Charity Rights to Engage in Nonpartisan Political Activities
  - ✚ Continue efforts to identify an alternative framework to “facts and circumstances” regulations for IRS rules covering charity political activity
  - ✚ Conduct a series of briefings around the country to discuss alternatives to the “facts and circumstances” test
  - ✚ Prepare a report on alternatives to the “facts and circumstances” test
  - ✚ Assess the value of launching a campaign to change the “facts and circumstances” test
  - ✚ Advocate for FEC rules that do not impair nonprofit issue advocacy