

March 9, 2016

Senator Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee
437 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Appreciation upon the Introduction of the Equal Access to Congressional Research Service Reports Act of 2016 (S.2639)

Dear Senator Leahy,

As organizations committed to the availability of information about our government and its transparency, we write to express our support for the Equal Access to Congressional Research Service Reports Act of 2016 (S. 2639), introduced last week. We extend our sincere gratitude for your many years of leadership in support of opening access to these valuable, taxpayer-funded reports. Your dedication to this issue reflects your investment in open government and transparency. We are appreciative of your efforts, and those of Senator John McCain, to make a bipartisan push for a more open government at a time when such work is particularly vital to our democracy.

Through its reports, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) plays a vital role in informing Congressional debate and lawmaking. Thus, this legislation will afford the public information critical to its involvement in the policymaking process. Requiring no-fee public access to CRS reports also will provide a valuable resource to educators and librarians across the country. Moreover, this bill is essential to ending the inequity in access for those who cannot afford to purchase information compiled with their tax dollars. Currently, CRS publications are primarily disseminated by individual Congressional offices or available comprehensively through paid services. Although some of the reports also find their way onto a handful of nonprofit and library websites, such incomplete collections do not guarantee the ease of access and broad use that providing them through the Government Publishing Office will offer.

We are committed to working hand in glove with your office as this legislation is considered in Congress, and look forward to providing whatever assistance we can in furthering efforts to advance S. 2639, and the vital open government reforms it will make, to the Senate floor and the President's desk.

Thank you again for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries
American Library Association
American Society of News Editors
Association of Alternative Newsmedia
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Center for Science and Democracy at the Union
of Concerned Scientists
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Common Cause
Data Coalition

Defending Dissent Foundation
Demand Progress
Free Government Information
Government Accountability Project
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight
R Street Institute
Society of American Archivists
Sunlight Foundation