

March 9, 2016

Senator John McCain  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
218 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 McCain,

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. We are appreciative of your efforts, and those of Senator Patrick Leahy, 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