



# Letter to the Library of Congress on CRS

February 25, 2011

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## Supporting Documents

Dear Dr. Billington:

We the undersigned organizations concerned with government openness and accountability are writing to urge you to appoint a Director of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) who will work with Congress to provide online free public access to the unclassified, non-confidential, taxpayer-funded reports produced by CRS.

The public needs access to these non-confidential CRS reports in order to discharge their civic duties. American taxpayers spend over \$100 million a year to fund the CRS, which generates detailed reports relevant to current political events for lawmakers. But while the reports are non-classified, and play a critical role in our legislative process, they have never been made available in a consistent and official way to members of the public. Predictably, to fill the public void left by the CRS, several private companies now sell copies of these reports at a price. This means that non-confidential CRS reports are readily available to lobbyists, executives and others who can afford to pay. Meanwhile, the vast majority of people lack the information necessary to even request reports from their Members of Congress.

In 1822, James Madison explained why citizens must have government information: "A popular government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." In the spirit of Madison, we ask you to appoint a Director of CRS who will help advance the goal of online free public access to CRS reports.

Representatives from the undersigned organizations would be happy to meet with you or your staff at any time to discuss this important issue. Please contact Amy Bennett, Program Associate, OpenTheGovernment.org ([afuller@openthegovernment.org](mailto:afuller@openthegovernment.org) [1] or 202-332-6736), at your convenience.

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