

April 16, 2012

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations dedicated to government openness and accountability are writing to urge you to oppose HR 3523, the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act of 2011, because it constitutes a wholesale attack on public access to information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

In the interest of encouraging private companies to share cybersecurity threat information, the bill unwisely and unnecessarily cuts off **all** public access to cyber threat information before the public and Congress have the chance to understand the types of information that are withheld under the bill. Much of the sensitive information private companies are likely to share with the government is already protected from disclosure under the FOIA. Other information that may be shared could be critical for the public to ensure its safety. The public needs access to some information to be able to assess whether the government is adequately combating cybersecurity threats and, when necessary, hold officials accountable.

Any effort to expand of the authority of the federal government to withhold information from the public should begin with careful consideration, including public hearings, by the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, which has jurisdiction over FOIA. That Committee has the expertise needed to ensure that FOIA-related provisions promote transparency and public accountability while allowing the government to withhold only that information which truly requires protection.

We urge you to oppose HR 3523, and we look forward to working with Congress to ensure any cybersecurity legislation passed into law both protects our nation's computer networks and promotes transparency and accountability to the public. If you would like to discuss these issues further, please contact Patrice McDermott, Executive Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, at 202-332-6736 or pmcdermott@openthegovernment.org.

Sincerely,

American Association of Law Libraries
American Association of University Professors
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression
American Library Association
American Society of News Editors
Association of Research Libraries
Bill of Rights Defense Committee
Center for Media and Democracy
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington - CREW
Community Research
Cyber Privacy Project
Electronic Frontier Foundation – EFF

Entertainment Consumers Association
Essential Information
Feminists for Free Expression
Fight for the Future, Center for Rights
Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism
Government Accountability Project - GAP
iSolon.org
James Madison Project
Liberty Coalition
MuckRock
National Coalition Against Censorship
National Freedom of Information Coalition
OMB Watch
OpenTheGovernment.org
Project On Government Oversight - POGO
Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility – PEER
The Pullins Report
Reporters Without Borders
Republican Liberty Caucus
Rutherford Institute
Society of American Archivists
Society of Professional Journalists
Special Libraries Association
Sunlight Foundation
Understanding Government
US Bill of Rights Foundation
Utah Foundation for Open Government
Washington Coalition for Open Government

Individuals (additional information for identification purposes only)

Brian R. Hook
Editor, B.R. Hook and Missouri Journal