

May 07, 2018

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
2208 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Armed Services
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2264 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the undersigned groups, we urge you to oppose the inclusion of the Department of
) proposal to alter the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) through the FY 2019
¹ would undermine

FOIA

Congress should not have the authority to withhold information from public examination without meaningful input and approval from the committees with jurisdiction over FOIA. FOIA-related legislation needs the careful consideration of those committees, including public hearings; such care is necessary to ensure that any change to the law promotes transparency and public accountability while allowing the government to withhold information that truly requires protection. A massive authorization bill, which has in previous years been marked up in secret in the Senate, is not the proper vehicle to amend FOIA as it applies to the largest executive branch agency.

This expansion is not only procedurally problematic, but also unnecessary. As stated above, FOIA exemption one, which already addresses [redacted] concerns,

Electronic Frontier Foundation
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Human Rights First
In the Public Interest
Interfaith Network on Drone Warfare
Liberty Coalition
National Security Archive
National Security Counselors

National Taxpayers Union
Project On Government Oversight
Public Citizen
Public Employees for Environmental
Responsibility (PEER)
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Society of Professional Journalists
Washington Office on Latin America
Win Without War

cc:

Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Senator Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
Representative Trey Gowdy, Chairman, House Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Representative Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member, House Oversight and Government Reform
Committee