

## House Marks Sunshine Week with Support for Open Government Legislation

*Chairman Towns pushes bills to increase transparency, openness in Federal government*

WASHINGTON – In honor of Sunshine Week in Congress, the House of Representatives today passed legislation that will make the government more accountable, transparent and responsive to the American people. House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform Chairman Edolphus “Ed” Towns (D-NY), who strongly supports an open and transparent government, recently shepherded the bills through the committee he chairs.

By a vote of 386 to 33, the House passed H.R. 946, the “Plain Language Act of 2009,” and by voice vote, the House passed H.R. 1387, the “Electronic Message Preservation Act.” Both bills are in step with the purpose of Sunshine Week which promotes the public’s right to know what its government is doing; empowers the American people to play an active role in their government; and provides the American people access to information that makes their lives better and their communities stronger.

“Congress is taking action this week to make the government more accountable, transparent and responsive to the American people,” said Chairman Towns. “President Obama has stated that his Administration is committed to creating an unprecedented level of openness in Government. Congress today passed legislation that will help the president meet this critical goal.”

H.R. 1387, the “Electronic Message Preservation Act,” amends both the Federal Records Act and the Presidential Records Act to ensure that agencies and the White House preserve e-mail records.

H.R. 946, the “Plain Language Act of 2009,” requires federal agencies to use plain writing in certain government documents. The bill defines plain language as writing that is clear, concise, and well-organized. Requiring government documents to be written clearly will make it easier for Americans to communicate with their government and it will make the federal government more accountable. H.R. 946 was introduced by Representative Bruce Braley (D-IA).

“There is no reason why the federal government can’t write these forms and other public documents in a way all Americans can understand,” said Rep. Braley. “Writing government documents in plain language will increase government accountability and will save Americans time and money. Plain, straightforward language makes it easy for taxpayers to understand what the federal government is doing and what services it is offering.”

“I urge my colleagues in the Senate to expedite passage of these important reforms and get them to the president’s desk for signature,” added Chairman Towns.

###