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(Washington, DC) – Today, Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD), Ranking Member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee Chairman Gerry Connolly (D-VA), and Democratic Committee Member Rep. Peter Welch (D-VT) sent Committee Chairman Darrell Issa (R-CA) a letter supporting the goals of the Freedom of Information Act, but raising concerns with the Chairman's recent requests to 180 federal agencies seeking massive numbers of emails and other documents.

Last Friday, Chairman Issa sent letters to 180 FOIA offices requesting agency FOIA logs over the past five years, plus "all communications," including emails, between agencies and requestors for all pending FOIA requests identified in agency FOIA logs that were sent 45 days prior to his letters. In their letter, Reps. Cummings, Connolly, and Welch wrote:

"Although we agree that effective oversight is needed to promote the goals of FOIA, we are concerned that the overwhelming scope of your recent document requests to 180 FOIA offices may have the opposite effect—impairing FOIA compliance rather than enhancing it." They added:

Your requests will produce vast amounts of information, but agency compliance with them could impair FOIA responsiveness to the public.

Without a defined focus, your inquiry will place a significant burden on FOIA offices and divert limited staff from processing requests from the public."

The Democratic Members asked Chairman Issa to reconsider his document requests and pursue "a more reasonable and efficient way for the Committee to obtain the information it needs without impairing the very FOIA offices we are trying to help." Their letter proposes concrete alternatives, including briefings by the Department of Justice and the Office of Government Information Services, requesting a more targeted subset of the Chairman's massive document request, and convening a forum with FOIA officers to discuss avenues for improving response times and operations.

"FOIA is one of the most important tools for promoting government transparency, facilitating public understanding of government operations, and shedding light on areas or programs that may be vulnerable to waste, fraud, or abuse," wrote the Democratic Members. "We look forward to working with you on additional solutions to improve FOIA responsiveness."

Below is a copy of the letter sent to Chairman Issa.

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Documents and Links

[Letter to Chairman Issa on the FOIA investigation \(.pdf\).](#)