

## Cummings Calls for Vote on Bill to Increase Transparency of Presidential and Federal Agency Records

*17 open government organizations endorse bill and call for swift bipartisan action*

May 2, 2011

Washington, DC – In advance of today’s hearing on preserving federal records in the electronic age, Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings sent a [letter](#) to Chairman Issa requesting a business meeting to markup H.R. 1144, “The Transparency and Openness in Government Act.”

The commonsense, noncontroversial reforms in this bill all passed the House of Representatives with widespread bipartisan support in the 111th Congress. The bill provides greater access to presidential records, secures electronic messages to and from Administration officials, makes federal advisory panels more accountable, and gives the Government Accountability Office more authority to access agency records.

More than 17 open government organizations have praised the bill as a key way to “make the government operate with more transparency and accountability.” In a [letter](#) sent to both Chairman Darrell Issa and Ranking Member Cummings, the group called for swift, bipartisan action on the legislation.

All Committee Democrats are original cosponsors of the legislation, which was introduced by Cummings on March 17. Last Congress, Chairman Issa, along with an overwhelming majority in Congress, backed the five bills that are now incorporated into H.R. 1144:

- **The Presidential Records Act Amendments** increases public access to presidential records by establishing statutory procedures for handling executive privilege claims prior to FOIA releases (passed the House on January 7, 2009, by a vote of 359 to 58).

- **The Electronic Message Preservation Act** modernizes the Federal Records Act and the Presidential Records Act to ensure that White House and agency email records are preserved electronically (passed the House on March 17, 2010, by voice vote).
  
- **The Government Accountability Office Improvement Act** strengthens the authority of GAO to access agency records in order to audit or investigate agencies on behalf of Congress (passed the House on January 13, 2010, by voice vote).
  
- **The Presidential Libraries Donation Reform Act** requires quarterly reporting to Congress and the National Archives of donations to presidential libraries of \$200 or more (passed the House on January 7, 2009, by a vote of 388 to 31)
  
- **The Federal Advisory Committee Act Amendments** requires agencies to disclose more information about advisory committees and closes existing loopholes (passed the House on July 26, 2010, by a vote of 250 to 124).

The Obama Administration has made improvements over previous administrations to preserve electronic White House records, including messages on social media platforms. The Administration has worked with the National Archives to develop protocols to preserve official postings and samples of public comments in a manner that is consistent with its protocols for written correspondence.

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**Documents for the May 3rd Full Committee Hearing: "Presidential Records in the New Millennium"**

Read Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings' Opening Statement

Read Testimony by [Brook Colangelo](#) , Chief Information Officer, Office of Administration, Executive Office of the President

Read Testimony by [David S. Ferriero](#) , Archivist of the United States, National Archives and Records Administration

Read the [letter from Congressman Cummings to Chairman Issa](#) , requesting consideration of H.R. 1144, the Transparency and Openness in Government Act

[Factsheet for H.R. 1144](#)

Read the [letter of support for H.R. 1144](#) from more than a dozen independent agencies