

WASHINGTON- Chairman Darrell Issa, R-Calif., and Ranking Member Elijah Cummings, D-Md., of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, sent a [letter](#) this week to the Department of Justice's top Freedom of Information Act officer posing 24 questions for the agency on longstanding problems in FOIA and the Department's role improving federal agency compliance with the transparency law.

"[T]he Committee seeks information about a number of issues including outdated FOIA regulations, exorbitant and possibly illegal fee assessments, FOIA backlogs, the excessive use of exemptions, and dispute resolution services," the Oversight leaders write.

Overall, agencies made more than 30,000 full denials and more than 171,000 partial denials in FY 2011. The letter notes, "DOJ itself increased the number of times it invoked Exemption 5, for deliberative process, from 1,231 times in 2010 to 1,500 times in 2011."

The letter notes:

- At least 56 agencies have not updated their FOIA regulations since Congress passed major changes to FOIA in the OPEN Government Act of 2007. DOJ's own regulations have not been updated since 2003.

- Some agencies may be violating changes made under the OPEN Government Act of 2007 concerning fee waivers, and the 1996 E-FOIA Act that requires frequently requested records to be posted online.

- Delays in responding to FOIA requests across the government continue to be a problem. For example, the Department of Homeland Security receives 27% of all FOIA requests, but is responsible for more than 50% of the 83,490 backlogged requests.

Read the letter [here](#) .