

NOVA

A BRIGHT STAR KEEPING
CALIFORNIANS AWARE

2007

Congressman Henry Waxman

Not since the career of the late John Moss of Sacramento (1915-1997) has a single member of the U.S. Congress worked so tirelessly to keep the federal government open to the scrutiny of the people as has Congressman Henry A. Waxman of the 30th District of California in Los Angeles.

Rep. Waxman is chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee in the current 110th Congress, which has just last week reported out four bills that would:

- require that all organizations established to raise funds for presidential libraries or their related facilities report on a quarterly basis all contributions of \$200 or more, with disclosed details available to the public through a free, searchable, and downloadable database on the Internet;
- amend the Presidential Records Act to overturn President George W. Bush's executive order of 2001, which gave current and former presidents and vice presidents broad authority to withhold presidential records or delay their release indefinitely;
- amend the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which Moss carried to passage 40 years ago, to make several long overdue reforms, including reaffirmation of the presumption that records should be released to the public if disclosure is allowable under law and the agency cannot reasonably foresee a harm from such a disclosure; and
- enact the Accountability in Contracting Act, which would among other things require agencies to limit the use of abuse-prone contracts and to increase transparency and accountability in federal contracting, requiring the public disclosure of justifications for no-bid contracts.

Only a month ago the committee reported out bills proposing a new Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act and an Executive Branch Reform Act, the latter of which would among other things stop the practice of secret meetings between lobbyists and Executive Branch; eliminate unregulated secrecy labels such as "sensitive but unclassified"; and requiring the government to disclose its role in funding or disseminating messages to the American public.

Rep. Waxman, a co-author of all these bills, has new influence in a Democrat majority Congress, but has been fighting for open government all his career. Only last fall he announced a six-point proposal for restoring honesty and accountability in government, four of which points formed the basis for the recently launched legislation.

We salute Rep. Waxman as second to none in the cause of federal transparency.



JW August
President, Californians Aware

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