

Oversight and Government Reform to act on this legislation. On Tuesday, the Washington Post editorialized that the House should promptly enact this bipartisan bill to improve the FOIA process.

Senator CORNYN and I first introduced the Faster FOIA Act in 2005, to address the growing problem of excessive FOIA delays within our Federal agencies. During the intervening years, the problem of excessive FOIA delays has not gone away. We reintroduced this bill in 2010, and the Senate unanimously passed it last year. The current bill is the most recent product of our bipartisan work to help reinvigorate FOIA.

The Faster FOIA Act would establish a bipartisan Commission on Freedom of Information Act Processing Delays to examine the root causes of excessive FOIA delays. The Commission would recommend to Congress and the President steps that should be taken to reduce these delays, so that the administration of the FOIA is more equitable and efficient.

The Faster FOIA Act will help ensure the dissemination of government information to the American people, so that our democracy remains vibrant and free. This is a laudable goal that we all share. Neither Chamber of Congress should allow partisan politics to obstruct the important goal of this bill.

The ongoing debate in Congress about the national debt has made clear that we must find ways to work together, across party lines and ideologies, to address the many challenges facing our Nation. This bipartisan spirit is at the core of the Faster FOIA Act. I have said many times that open government is neither a Democratic issue, nor a Republican issue it is truly an American value and virtue that we all must uphold. I urge the Senate to include the Faster FOIA Act in its budget bill, and I urge the Congress to promptly enact this good government measure.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the letters in support of reinstating the Faster FOIA Act in the final debt ceiling package.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

SUNSHINE IN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE,
Arlington, VA, July 29, 2011.

Hon. HARRY REID,
U.S. Senate.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
U.S. Senate.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
U.S. House of Representatives.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
U.S. House of Representatives.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID, MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER BOEHNER, AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: We urge the Congress to reinstate the bipartisan, uncontroversial language strengthening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) that was removed from S. 627, the Faster FOIA Act, as it was amended to address the unrelated issue surrounding the debt limit. The original language would create a bipartisan commission to recommend concrete ways to

strengthen transparency in the federal government and has broad, bipartisan support.

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is a coalition of media associations promoting government transparency, especially focusing on FOIA. SGI members include the American Society of News Editors, the Associated Press, Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, National Newspaper Association, Newspaper Association of America, Radio Television Digital News Association, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and Society of Professional Journalists.

Especially in this fiscal environment, the Faster FOIA Commission would help the public understand how taxpayer dollars are being spent by bringing together experts inside and outside the government to look “under the hood” of agency FOIA operations and to propose within a year the most realistic, effective and cost-efficient improvements to improve government transparency.

The Freedom of Information Act is the vital law that helps ensure the public can see what its government is up to while protecting personal privacy, national security, trade secrets and other important interests. The Commission’s work should provide timely insight to help inform next steps that Congress with your leadership might undertake to strengthen transparency in the federal government.

Sincerely,

RICK BLUM,
Coordinator.

JULY 28, 2011.

Hon. HARRY REID,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate, The Capitol,
Washington, DC.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives, The
Capitol, Washington, DC.

Hon. MITCH MCCONNELL,
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate, The Capitol,
Washington, DC.

Hon. NANCY PELOSI,
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives,
The Capitol, Washington, DC.

DEAR MAJORITY LEADER REID, MINORITY LEADER MCCONNELL, SPEAKER BOEHNER AND MINORITY LEADER PELOSI: On behalf of the undersigned organizations concerned with government openness and accountability, we are writing to urge you to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627, now known as the Budget Control Act of 2011.

This week, Speaker Boehner took S. 627 as a vehicle for his budget bill. This procedural maneuver could shave a few days off of Senate consideration, should the House pass the Boehner budget control bill. However, in doing so, the Speaker unnecessarily stripped the Faster FOIA Act from S.627, completely replacing the language with the budget bill. If the Faster FOIA language is not restored in S. 627, the bipartisan progress made by the Senate on the legislation will be wiped out. This is a setback for openness and accountability in the executive branch, and bipartisan action in Congress.

The Senate unanimously passed the Faster FOIA Act, authored by Senator Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Cornyn (R-TX) in May. The legislation would establish the Commission on Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Processing Delays (the Commission) to examine several thorny issues that create unreasonable bars to public access under the FOIA and recommend to Congress and the President steps that should be taken to reduce delays and make the administration of the FOIA equitable and efficient throughout the federal government.

The Faster FOIA Act enjoys strong support among a broad range of non-governmental organizations. Recently, more than 35 orga-

nizations joined to urge the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform to act on the legislation. A recent editorial in the Washington Post also called on the House to embrace the bill in the same bipartisan spirit as the Senate in the interest of improving the FOIA process.

We urge you to advance openness and accountability to restore the bipartisan Faster FOIA provisions in S. 627. We thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

American Library Association, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington—CREW, Electronic Frontier Foundation, Freedom of Information Center at the Missouri School of Journalism, Fund for Constitutional Government, National Freedom of Information Coalition, National Security Archive, OMB Watch, OpenTheGovernment.org, Project On Government Oversight—POGO, Public Citizen, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press.

MORNING BUSINESS

BROWN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Mr. REED. Mr. President, I believe libraries are critical institutions to our Nation and our democracy. Today, I recognize one library in particular, Brown University Library, for its 150th anniversary as Rhode Island’s oldest Federal Depository Library.

The Federal Depository Library Program was established by Congress to ensure that the American public could access government records and information locally. The 10 depository libraries in Rhode Island are part of a network of more than 1,200 libraries nationwide that provide free access to Federal Government materials, both in print and online.

In 1861, under a newly enacted law granting each Senator the authority to assign one depository in their State, Senator James F. Simmons designated the Brown University Library as an official depository to receive U.S. Government publications. While Brown University had been receiving government documents through various channels since revolutionary times, this designation established Brown as the first depository library in Rhode Island and one of the earliest so designated libraries in the Nation.

For the past 150 years, the Brown University Library has helped students, faculty, and residents throughout Rhode Island find and use government information. The collection at Brown contains a wide variety of government documents that reflect the rich history of Rhode Island and the Nation as a whole, including historical debates surrounding the adoption of the 13th amendment abolishing slavery and legislation authored by my predecessor Senator Claiborne Pell establishing the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. It is also home to a wealth of information useful to Rhode Islanders, such as demographic

data on the changing and diverse nature of the State's population; a vast array of health and wellness materials; and business and economic news and reports.

Since 1994, Brown and other Federal depository libraries have worked in partnership with the U.S. Government Printing Office to make government information in a digital format directly accessible to the public via the Internet. First, through the GPO Access online system, and now through GPO's Federal Digital System, the American public has free access to authenticated information from all three branches of the Federal Government.

Across the country, Federal depository libraries enable the public to stay informed on the workings of our government and provide free access to all types of essential information. Additionally, they play a vital role in preserving the historical record of our democracy. I congratulate Brown University Library for its 150 years of serving as a resource for the people of Rhode Island and am proud to celebrate an institution that is dedicated to informing Rhode Islanders and advancing the values of our democracy.

TRIBUTE TO DAVE JOHNSON

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today, with several of my colleagues to recognize the outstanding service and contribution of a fellow Hoosier and life-long public servant, Dave Johnson.

Dave first joined my staff in 1987 and he has been a brilliant resource to me over the years since then. Dave is a truly gifted individual. He is knowledgeable about all facets of agricultural and food policy and is able to see all of the potential opportunities and challenges with proposed legislation. Dave is always prepared to interact with a Member on the Senate floor during consideration of agriculture legislation, and equally at ease in dealing with Indiana constituents or farmers from anywhere in the United States. His mark can be found on countless pieces of Senate food and agriculture legislation, ranging from nutrition to biomass to conservation. Dave is always an available and willing resource to members on the Agriculture Committee, or other members from the Senate as a whole who seldom delve into agricultural policy discussions.

Dave and I have shared one true passion over our years of service—nutrition. I have long been an advocate of nutrition programs, and specifically a supporter of the school lunch program. It has been Dave's dedicated counsel and advice that has helped to shape these important programs into what they are today. I remember that on one occasion, while traveling back home in southern Indiana, I learned from my constituents of some of the deficiencies in a local summer children's nutrition program. I shared these concerns with Dave, and within a matter of days Dave responded to my request and had a bill

on my desk. That legislation proposed a pilot project, which was approved by Congress, and today has been expanded to a nationwide program.

Dave has never been intimidated by the vastness of diversity in agriculture. He has always been able to determine the appropriate solution to a real problem, and then draft the implementing legislation to go along with it. He is never too busy to take the time to mentor young staff members by sharing his vast knowledge and experience, and he is always willing to reach across the aisle to contribute to more effective results for American agriculture.

Dave, I don't know how we will write a farm bill without you. You will be sincerely missed.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I am pleased to commend Dave Johnson for 23 years of service to the Federal Government. I am very grateful for his effective and dedicated leadership as chief counsel of the Senate Agriculture Committee during the time I served as chairman of the Committee.

He also served in important jobs at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission, as well as the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. The farm bills that Mr. Johnson helped draft during his career are impressive examples of his insight and good judgment.

The far-reaching effects of his contributions to the field of agriculture are illustrated by the successes we have had as a Nation as a result of our food and agriculture policies. I congratulate Dave Johnson for his impressive career of improving the quality of life of rural America.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Dave on his 23 years of service as a public servant. His career, including service in the Senate, the Department of Agriculture and the Commodities Futures Trading Commission, has led him to be one of the most influential staffers on legislation supporting farmers, ranchers and the less privileged across the country.

For those of us who have had the pleasure of knowing and working closely with him, we know Dave as a true professional and an extremely thoughtful individual. His knowledge and experience have served as a virtual encyclopedia for policy makers on this Committee and in the Executive Branch. The talent and knowledge that Dave possesses reflects a career of dedicated service that cannot be replicated or easily replaced. His well-earned departure will create a void that will be difficult to fill.

As I look back at Dave's career and the years I served as chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I can say I am particularly proud of Dave's work on nutrition and food assistance programs. I know my colleagues and I can attest to Dave's care for and dedication to improving the lives of the less privileged. His tireless efforts to secure funding for the hungry and less

privileged through the 1996 farm bill, the 1994 Child Nutrition Act and countless other pieces of legislation are a testament to his sense of duty and his nonpartisan approach to identifying solutions that advance the promise of our great Nation to all of our citizens. I was always honored to have his passion and advocacy for the disadvantaged on my side of the aisle.

Dave has made a real impact on the lives of all Americans and has done so with a modest approach that sought solutions over recognition. Dave is one of the most modest individuals I have ever met and I am certain his modesty is born of his upbringing. Dave's approach to work in Washington, DC, has always been governed by the lessons he learned on his family farm in rural Indiana. He does not boast of his many achievements nor lecture those who seek his counsel or advice. I have always known him to be quiet and unpretentious in spite of his achievements and station. He has sought to act as a mentor to young staffers and wise counsel to the Senators and policy makers who have called on him throughout the years.

On behalf of my former agriculture committee staff and for myself, I want to thank Dave for his service to the U.S. Senate and to our country. I wish him the best as he moves on to his next adventure.

Mr. JOHANNIS. Mr. President, I rise today to echo my colleagues in recognizing Dave Johnson for his commitment to public service. Having spent 23 years working on agriculture and food policy for the Federal Government, Dave has demonstrated a rare dedication to an industry that provides food, feed, fiber and fuel to people all around the globe.

While serving as Secretary of Agriculture, I had the privilege of working closely with Dave, who was Deputy Chief of Staff at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. I fondly remember the many hours Dave spent putting pen to paper and drawing together our ideas into legislative language for Congress to consider as part of the 2007–2008 farm bill process. His knowledge of agriculture policy and his work ethic were invaluable to our efforts. The many hours we spent working on farm policy led to a friendship that I continue to appreciate.

Twenty-three years is a long time to spend as a public servant and Dave has earned our sincerest gratitude for his years of service to farmers, ranchers, conservationists, nutrition advocates, rural Americans and all those affected by USDA policies, who have directly or indirectly benefitted from his work.

I wish Dave the very best as he opens a new chapter in his life. I am confident that with his positive attitude, principled approach and genuinely kind heart, success will follow him down whatever path he chooses.

Mr. ROBERTS. I would like to take a few moments this morning to wander from regular order to recognize a long-