

CREW Cuts

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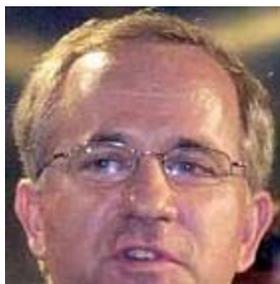
Tell CREW What Information You Want Our Government to Make Public

On January 22, in response to President Obama's "Open Government Directive," federal agencies began posting what they believe to be "high-value" information to [Data.gov](#). But with no guidance on the meaning of "high-value," the obscure posts ranged from the Interior Department's [population count of horses and burros](#) to the Justice Department's [1987 survey of jails](#).

What "high-value" information do you want to see our government post? Send an email to info@citizensforethics.org with the subject line "High-Value Data Is ♦" and let us know. We'll send your recommendations to the White House - letting government officials know what information the American people want to see made public.



CREW Files Ethics and IRS Complaints Against Rep. Steve Buyer



On January 25, CREW filed complaints with the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) against Rep. Steve Buyer (R-IN) and his so-called charity, the Frontier Foundation. Frontier claims its central mission is to provide Indiana students with scholarships to attend college, but it has not awarded a single scholarship in six years of existence. Rather, the organization serves as a platform for Rep. Buyer to attend expensive golf outings with corporate representatives with business before Congress seeking to curry the congressman's favor.

In one example, the pharmaceutical trade group PhRMA donated \$200,000 to Frontier



and hired Rep. Buyer's son right out of college. Rep. Buyer later helped defeat a proposed three-year ban on advertising new drugs, a big win for PhRMA and its members.

A few days after CREW filed its complaints, Rep. Buyer announced he will retire from Congress after the end of this term. Nevertheless, the IRS still should determine whether Frontier has violated federal tax law by failing to operate for its stated purpose of sending students to college. Surely, at least one needy student could have gone to college for the price of Rep. Buyer's golf events.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's complaints to the IRS and the OCE and the accompanying exhibits for each complaint](#)

[Read *The Indianapolis Star* article](#)

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CREW Analyzes the Obama Administration's Transparency Achievements and Shortcomings



On January 21, one year after the White House issued two memoranda outlining President Obama's goals for government transparency, CREW sent a letter to the president praising his efforts to overcome government secrecy, but noting that significant challenges still remain.

CREW's letter commended the president's January 21, 2009 memoranda on [Open and Transparent Government](#) and the [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA), which represent an unprecedented effort to usher in a new era of government accountability. The Obama administration's decision to voluntarily post [White House visitor logs](#) (as part of a settlement of CREW's lawsuit over access to the logs) and the Office of Management and Budget's [Open Government Directive](#) requiring agencies to publicly publish data are also important steps forward for transparency.

While these calls to action prove the president's commitment to openness is genuine, CREW's interactions with agencies over the past year indicate that major work remains in turning these goals into practice. Several of CREW's FOIA requests - including a request for information on H1N1 vaccine distribution policies and records of reforms made after the Madoff scandal - have been met with reluctance despite significant public interest. Additionally, it took a CREW lawsuit victory to force the Justice Department to disclose the interview former Vice President Dick Cheney gave to the FBI in the Valerie Plame Wilson leak investigation.

CREW can marshal aggressive legal and press strategies to force the government to release information, but true open access means everyone - individuals and organizations alike - should be able to acquire information. President Obama laid the framework for creating a culture of transparency, but that framework must translate to actual policy to succeed.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's letter to President Obama](#)

[Read *The Washington Post* article](#)

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Ensign Update: FBI is Investigating



On January 19, CREW learned the FBI has been interviewing witnesses in its investigation into the scandal surrounding Sen. John Ensign (R-NV). The embattled senator likely has committed at least two felony violations: conspiring to help his former aide Doug Hampton violate the one-year ban on lobbying one's former congressional office and failing to report to the Federal Election Commission a \$96,000 severance payment made to his mistress, and Doug Hampton's wife, Cynthia Hampton.

The FBI's involvement sends a clear message to government officials: no one is above the law, not even a powerful senator. CREW has been calling for investigations into Sen. Ensign's conduct since this story broke in July 2009, filing complaints with the Department of Justice, the Senate Ethics Committee, and the Federal Election Commission. With this confirmation of FBI involvement, Sen. Ensign has lost what little credibility he had left in serving the people of Nevada in Congress. It is past time for the senator to resign.

[Read the *Politico* article that broke the story](#)

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CREW Sues SEC for Records of Reforms Made in Wake of Madoff Scandal



On January 6, CREW filed a lawsuit against the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) over the Commission's failure to respond to a Freedom of Information Act request for records of reforms the SEC made in the wake of the Bernard Madoff scandal. The SEC infamously failed to detect and stop Madoff's \$65 billion Ponzi scheme despite receiving several tips over a 16-year period.

The SEC claimed in January 2009 that it had begun implementing "decisive and comprehensive" reforms to reduce the chance similar missteps could again occur, and the Commission's own Inspector General issued a report suggesting 58 such reforms in September.

The SEC is America's main defense against mega-fraudsters like Madoff, and the American public deserves to know what steps the Commission is taking to reform its ways after such a substantial failure.

[Learn more](#)

[Read CREW's complaint](#)

[Read CREW's FOIA request](#)

[Read the *Reuters* article](#)

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