

improve agency FOIA performance, FOIA backlogs are at an alltime high. According to a recent report by the Government Accountability Office, Federal agencies had 43 percent more FOIA requests pending and outstanding in 2006 than in 2002. In addition, the percentage of FOIA requestors who obtained at least some of the information that they requested from the Government declined by 31 percent in 2006, according to a study by the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government.

As the first major reform to FOIA in more than a decade, the OPEN Government Act would help to reverse these troubling trends and to restore the public's trust in their Government. In so doing, this bill is a fitting tribute to FOIA and a wise investment in our American democracy.

The OPEN Government Act promotes and enhances public disclosure of Government information under FOIA by helping Americans to obtain timely responses to their FOIA requests. This bill also improves transparency in the Federal Government's FOIA process by restoring meaningful deadlines for agency action under FOIA; imposing real consequences on Federal agencies for missing FOIA's 20-day statutory deadline; clarifying that FOIA applies to Government records held by outside private contractors; establishing a FOIA hotline service for all Federal agencies; and creating a FOIA Ombudsman to provide FOIA requestors and Federal agencies with a meaningful alternative to costly litigation.

Let me also be clear about what this bill does not do. This bill does not harm or impede in any way the Government's ability to withhold or protect classified information. Classified, national security and homeland security-related information are all expressly exempt from FOIA's disclosure mandate, and this bill does nothing to alter these important exemptions. Senator CORNYN and I have also offered an amendment to this bill that would preserve the right of Federal agencies to assert these and other FOIA exemptions, even if agencies miss the 20-day statutory deadline under FOIA.

The OPEN Government Act is cosponsored by a bipartisan group of 13 Senators, including the bill's lead Republican cosponsor, Senator CORNYN. This bill is also endorsed by more than 115 business, public interest, and news organizations from across the political and ideological spectrum, including the American Library Association, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, OpenTheGovernment.org, Public Citizen, the Republican Liberty Caucus, the Sunshine in Government Initiative, and the Vermont Press Association. I thank all of the cosponsors of this bill for their commitment to open government. I also thank the many organizations that have endorsed the OPEN Government Act for their support of this legislation.

The OPEN Government Act is a good-government bill that Democrats and

Republicans alike can and should work together to enact. If there are legitimate concerns with this bill, those concerns should be openly debated and the Senate should promptly pass this legislation.

Senator CORNYN and I both know that open government is not a Democratic issue or a Republican issue. It is an American issue. It is in this bipartisan spirit that I urge the Senate to promptly consider the OPEN Government Act and that I encourage all Senators to support this important FOIA reform legislation.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD a list of the bill's supporters following my remarks.

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

LIST OF SUPPORTERS OF THE LEAHY-CORNYN  
OPEN GOVERNMENT ACT, S. 849

Alliance for Justice  
America Association of Law Libraries  
American Association of Small Property Owners  
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression  
American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)  
The American Conservative Union  
American Families United  
American Library Association  
American Society of Newspaper Editors, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Animal Welfare Institute  
ASPCA  
Assassination Archives and Research Center  
Associated Press, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Association of Alternative Newsweeklies, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Association of American Publishers  
Bill of Rights Defense Committee  
Biodiversity Conservation Alliance  
Blancett Ranches, Aztec, NM  
Californians Aware  
Californians for Western Wilderness  
Center for Democracy and Technology  
Center for Energy Research  
Center for National Security Studies  
Citizen Action New Mexico  
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)  
Chamber of Commerce of the United States  
Coalition of Journalists for Open Government, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Common Cause  
Community Recovery Services  
Conservation Congress  
Doctors for Open Government  
DownsizeDC.org, Inc.  
The E-Accountability Foundation  
ParentAdvocates.org  
Electronic Frontier Foundation  
Environmental Defense Institute  
Environmental Integrity Project  
Ethics in Government Group  
Fernald Residents for Environmental Safety & Health, Inc.  
Florida First Amendment Foundation  
Forest Guardians  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Friends of Animals  
Friends of the Wild Swan  
Georgia Forest Watch  
Georgians for Open Government  
Government Accountability Project  
Great Basin Mine Watch  
Gun Owners of America  
HALT, Inc.  
The Health Integrity Project

HEAL Utah  
The Humane Society of the United States  
Idaho Sporting Congress, Inc.  
Indiana Coalition for Open Government  
The James Madison Project  
Law Librarian Association of Greater New York  
Law Librarians Association of Wisconsin  
League of Women Voters of the U.S.  
Liberty Coalition  
Los Alamos Study Group  
Maine Association of Broadcasters  
Mine Safety and Health News  
The Multiracial Activist  
National Association of Broadcasters, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
National Association of Manufacturers  
National Coalition Against Censorship  
National Freedom of Information Coalition  
National Newspaper Association, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
National Press Club  
National Security Archive  
National Taxpayers Union  
National Treasury Employees Union  
National Whistleblower Center  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
The New Grady Coalition  
Newspaper Association of America, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
No FEAR Coalition  
Northern California Association of Law Libraries  
Northwest Environmental Advocates  
Nuclear Watch New Mexico  
Okanogan Highlands Bottling Company  
OMB Watch  
Open Society Policy Center  
OpenTheGovernment.org  
Oregon Natural Desert Association  
Oregon Peace Works  
Owner-Operator Independent Drivers Association, Inc.  
People For the American Way  
Project On Government Oversight  
Public Citizen  
Radio-Television News Directors Association, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
ReadTheBill.org Education Fund  
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Republican Liberty Caucus  
Reynolds, Motl & Sherwood, PLLP  
The Rutherford Institute  
Sagebrush Sea Campaign  
Sammelweis Society International  
Snake River Alliance  
Society of American Archivists  
Society of Professional Journalists, Member of Sunshine in Government Initiative  
Southern California Association of Law Libraries  
Southwest Research and Information Center  
The Student Health Integrity Project  
Tax Analysts  
Tri-Valley CAREs (Communities Against a Radioactive Environment)  
Union of Concerned Scientists  
VA Whistleblowers Coalition  
Vermont Coalition for Open Government  
Vermont Press Association  
Western Environmental Law Center  
Western Lands Project  
Western Resource Advocates  
The Wilderness Society  
Wild Wilderness  
Wilderness Workshop

REMEMBERING SENATOR CRAIG  
THOMAS

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, it has been said that we all have a birth date

and a death date, with a dash in between. It is what we do with our dash that counts.

Senator Craig Thomas made his count. He was a dedicated public servant, a vigorous advocate, a compassionate leader, a marine, a proud patriot. To the citizens of his beloved Wyoming and to his colleagues in the Senate, he was a cherished friend.

Although my State and his are miles apart, with vastly different geography and history, I am struck by the similarities in the character of our people. Both the rugged Maine Yankee and the tough Wyoming cowboy are steadfast and modest. Both are determined, committed to doing what is right rather than what is easy. An old cowboy proverb says, "The best way out of a tight spot is to go straight through it," and Craig Thomas always faced challenges head-on. I have no doubt that he would have been just as at home on the deck of a lobster boat as he was on horseback, riding the range.

As a Senator representing a large rural State, I deeply appreciate Craig's devotion to preserving and enhancing a way of life that is such a vital part of the American spirit. His tireless work on such issues as agriculture, Indian affairs, natural resources, rural health care, and educational opportunity will help ensure a better future for people in small communities throughout our nation.

The courage and integrity with which he led his life were evident until the very end. Although stricken with a terrible disease, Craig always put his Nation and his State first. There was no time for self-pity or regret while there was still work to be done. He stayed in the saddle.

Craig was a public man, but, first and foremost, he was a loving husband, a devoted father, and a proud grandfather. In this time of sorrow, I know that his wonderful family finds strength in his honorable legacy. Senator Craig Thomas filled his dash with service, courage, and commitment, with life and love. May his memory inspire us all to do the same.

#### MATTHEW SHEPARD ACT OF 2007

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I rise today to speak about the need for hate crimes legislation. Each Congress, Senator KENNEDY and I introduce hate crimes legislation that would add new categories to current hate crimes law, sending a signal that violence of any kind is unacceptable in our society. Likewise, each Congress I have come to the floor to highlight a separate hate crime that has occurred in our country.

On April 12, 2007, in Crothersville, IN, Coleman King and Garrett Gray beat a man to death for allegedly making a sexual proposition to one of them. As the two young men were returning to Gray's house from an errand that day, they picked up 35-year-old Aaron Hall. The two men told police that Hall had

propositioned King; in retaliation, King and Gray began to beat Hall. The two men allegedly struck Hall until his eyes were swollen shut and he was spitting blood. They then carted him off to a ditch, continued to beat him and left him for dead. The two men drove back to the ditch with a shotgun later that day in order to make sure Hall was dead, but found him instead several days later dead in a nearby field, where he had apparently crawled.

I believe that the Government's first duty is to defend its citizens, to defend them against the harms that come out of hate. The Matthew Shepard Act is a symbol that can become substance. I believe that by passing this legislation and changing current law, we can change hearts and minds as well.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### TRIBUTE TO JIM BOWMAN

• Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I pay tribute today to a legend of the U.S. Air Force Academy's athletic department, Mr. Jim Bowman. After dedicating 49 years of service over six decades to the Air Force Academy, Mr. Bowman, the associate athletics director for recruiting and support, will retire at the end of July 2007.

Mr. Bowman excelled on the football field at Michigan's Charlevoix High School. Following graduation, Mr. Bowman brought his on-the-field tenacity to the University of Michigan, where he played 3 years for the Wolverines, lettering at center his senior year. After graduation in 1956, Bowman joined the Air Force and completed pilot training in 1957 and also attended B-47 transition school.

In 1958, Lieutenant Bowman arrived at the Air Force Academy as junior varsity football coach. He led the junior varsity team for a total of 5 years and the freshman team for 11 years. In addition to his coaching duties, Mr. Bowman also began serving as the Academy's associate athletic director for admissions. However, after the 1975 season, when the Academy added 10 Varsity women's teams in addition to the 17 existing men's teams, Bowman stepped down from coaching to devote his full-time duties to recruiting support.

At the Air Force Academy, Bowman served on a coaching staff that led the Falcons to 17 postseason bowl games and 16 Commander-in-Chief's Trophies, as the top service academy football team. Since arriving at the Academy, Bowman has seen every class graduate, totaling 38,797 cadets to date, has overseen the appointment of an estimated 14,000 recruited athletes, and administered 49 admission cycles. Through this period, Mr. Bowman worked with 16 superintendents, 22 commandants of cadets, 8 deans of faculty, 8 athletic directors, 10 directors of admissions, and 120 assistant football coaches. His extensive experience in all phases of

intercollegiate athletics has contributed immensely to the development of the Air Force Academy's athletic programs. Mr. Bowman is an honorary member of the Academy Association of Graduates and a lifetime member of the American Football Coaches Association. In 2001, Bowman was inducted into the Colorado Springs Sports Hall of Fame as part of the 1958 Cotton Bowl team.

Jim Bowman's retirement from the Academy marks the end of an era in Air Force Academy athletics. His 49 years of dedication to Falcon athletes, our future Air Force officers, and the Academy is simply unparalleled. Although his service at the Academy will be missed, I know Mr. Bowman will continue to serve his country in whatever future endeavors he chooses to pursue.

I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Jim Bowman's hard work and commitment to the U.S. Air Force Academy, the Air Force, and our country. While Mr. Bowman described his service to the Academy as "a privilege and an honor," it is our Nation that is indebted to Jim Bowman for his positive influence in helping to shape the characters of so many of our future military leaders.●

#### CONGRATULATING CHARLES J. MARTINEZ

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I pay tribute to Charles J. Martinez of Bowling Green, KY, on being recognized as a winner of the Library of Congress's 2007 Letters About Literature competition.

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing program sponsored by the Library's Center for the Book. Throughout the country more than 56,000 young readers in grades 4 through 12 participated in the program, which encourages young kids to read and write a letter to their favorite author, of any era, whose books inspired them.

Charles chose to write about author J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series. He was one of two winners chosen this year in the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

I now ask my fellow colleagues to join me in congratulating Charles for his dedication and commitment to reading and writing. In order for our society to continue to advance in the right direction, we must encourage more young people like Charles to read and write as often as possible. He represents Kentucky at its finest.●

#### CONGRATULATING CARLEY SMITH

• Mr. BUNNING. Mr. President, today I also pay tribute to Carley Smith of Harrodsburg, KY, on being recognized as a winner of the Library of Congress's 2007 Letters About Literature competition.

Letters About Literature is a reading and writing program sponsored by the