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REP. WAXMAN TO INTRODUCE LEGISLATION TO RESTORE TRANSPARENCY AND OPEN GOVERNMENT LAWS

WASHINGTON, DC — Today Rep. Henry A. Waxman announced his intention to introduce legislation to reverse the Bush Administration's assault on open government by restoring laws promoting transparency. The Restore Open Government Act of 2005 requires public disclosure of government information and presidential documents, promotes timely declassification of information, and prohibits secret advisory meetings between government officials and private parties.

"The government has a responsibility to share information," Rep. Waxman said. "Under the Bush Administration, the operating assumption has been that the public should be kept in the dark as much as possible. This bill restores openness and integrity to the relationship between government and the people it serves."

The bill provides clear, common-sense changes to current government policies to prevent secrecy. It would:

- Restore the presumption of public disclosure of information from government agencies under the Freedom of Information Act by overturning the "Ashcroft" and "Card" memos;
- Eliminate unnecessary pseudo-classification designations and empower the Archivist of the United States to regulate the use of information control designations;
- Prohibit secret advisory committees and require that any meetings between government employee advisory committees and influential private industry groups, such as the Vice President's energy task force, be transparent to the public;
- Provide for the timely release of presidential records by repealing President Bush's executive order, which severely curtailed access; and
- Provide for timely declassification of government documents by funding the Public Interest Declassification Board, which was created in 2000.

A bill summary is available online at http://www.democrats.reform.house.gov.