

June 26, 2012

Senator Claire McCaskill
United States Senate
506 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Claire McCaskill:

We, the undersigned national organizations representing a range of policies, interests and ideologies, asked you and other members of the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC) to open this year's markup of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to the public.

We thank you for voting to do so and for your continued leadership on more transparency. Notably, you are the only SASC Subcommittee Chair who has chosen to debate and vote on the NDAA in the open during the last two years. We applaud your efforts to open the full committee markup and your determination to achieve greater transparency and accountability in the Senate defense budget process.

We are disappointed, however, that the majority of the committee voted to shield the debate on the Pentagon budget bill—a bill that authorized more than \$631 billion in spending—behind closed doors.

The bill was not disclosed to the public until nearly two weeks after the secret deliberations concluded.

Like you, we believe that the public has a right to know how Congress is conducting the people's business, particularly when so many taxpayer dollars and important wide-ranging policies are at stake.

Meanwhile, House counterparts allowed for public access to their debate and votes on their version of the National Defense Authorization Act (HR 4310). The bill was made public prior to the committee's votes, and the markup was webcast live. The House Armed Services Committee (HASC) only goes into closed session when it's necessary to discuss classified information, but debates the rest of the bill in public. This year HASC did not find it necessary to close to discuss classified information at all. It seems doubtful that the same spending bill could be discussed openly in one chamber but not the other.

Is there more classified information pertinent to the same spending bill in the Senate?

We think not. Even if SASC does need to move to closed session to discuss some pertinent classified information, that's no reason to close the entire markup.

If the House can do it, so can the Senate.

Again, we thank you and the bipartisan group of seven other committee members who voted for more openness and democracy.

We will continue to press for the Senate Armed Services Committee to bring the NDAA into the light of day, and we look forward to your help in achieving this important milestone for our democracy.

Sincerely,

3P Human Security	Defending Dissent Foundation	OMB Watch
American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression (ABFFE)	Essential Information	Open Society Policy Center
American Civil Liberties Union	Federation of American Scientists	OpenTheGovernment.org
American Library Association	Feminists for Free Expression	Peace Action West
American Values Network	Freedom of Information Center	Progressive Librarians Guild
Bill of Rights Defense Committee	Friends Committee on National Legislation	Project On Government Oversight (POGO)
Campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Free World	Human Rights First	Public Citizen
Center for International Policy	Human Rights Watch	Sunlight Foundation
Center for Media and Democracy	iSolon.org	Taxpayers for Common Sense
Center for Victims of Torture	Just Foreign Policy	Taxpayers Protection Alliance
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington	Liberty Coalition	The Constitution Project
Common Cause	National Coalition Against Censorship	U.S. PIRG
Council for a Livable World	National Freedom of Information Coalition	Washington Coalition for Open Government
	National Taxpayers Union	Washington Office on Latin America