

June 26, 2017

**U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515
Main Number: (202) 225-2771**

Dear Chairman Yoder and Ranking Member Ryan,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we sincerely thank you and the Legislative Branch Subcommittee for including language in report accompanying the FY 2018 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill that expand public access to all non-confidential Congressional Research Service reports. This is a major step for congressional transparency and will grant everyday citizens access to important information that will better educate them about the issues before Congress. Fighting for transparency in Congress is never easy, but is always the right thing to do. We appreciate all the hard work the subcommittee has done and applaud your efforts to make Congress a more open institution.

As you are well-aware, CRS and its work has a tremendous impact in shaping congressional policy. The service produces thousands of nonpartisan reports describing government agencies, explaining public policy and tallying government spending. It is the go-to academic resource for Congress, upon which both members and staff rely heavily. However, it is time to allow the sunshine in for the American people to see the research funded by their tax dollars. Currently, lobbyists and well-connected insiders can access CRS reports via expensive subscription services. Denying access to the general public serves to stifle debate and limit ideas that are the bedrock of American democracy. Congress is required to do the peoples' work in public. The research that shapes that work should not be hidden away.

As this issue moves to the full Appropriations Committee, we encourage you and all members of the subcommittee to continue to fight for this provision to be retained in the final bill. The American people deserve a Congress that is open and honest about how its laws are crafted. Opening CRS reports to the general public is a powerful message that Congress wants to include the American people in the process of governing.

Sincerely,

R Street Institute
Demand Progress