

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Freedom of Information Act generally provides that any person has a right, enforceable in court, to obtain access to federal agency records, except to the extent that such records (or portions of them) are protected from disclosure by one of nine exemptions or by one of three special law enforcement record exclusions.

Enacted in 1966, the FOIA established for the first time an effective statutory right of access to government information. The principles of government openness and accountability underlying the FOIA, however, are inherent in the democratic ideal: "The basic purpose of [the] FOIA is to ensure an informed citizenry, vital to the functioning of a democratic society, needed to check against corruption and to hold the governors accountable to the governed." The Supreme Court has emphasized that "official information that sheds light on an agency's performance of its statutory duties falls squarely within that statutory purpose."

This was emphasized also in the statement of FOIA policy issued by President Clinton on October 4, 1993, in which he called upon all federal agencies to renew their commitment to the Act and to enhance its effectiveness as a vital mechanism of government openness and accountability:

"For more than a quarter century now, the Freedom of Information Act has played a unique role in strengthening our democratic form of government. The statute was enacted based upon the fundamental principle that an informed citizenry is essential to the democratic process and that the more the American people know about their government the better they will be governed. Openness in government is essential to accountability and the Act has become an integral part of that process."

[Army Regulation 25-55](#)
[The Department of the Army Freedom of Information Act Program](#)

