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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

February 27, 2008

Senator Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Committee on Rules and Administration
305 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Feinstein:

As you know, on December 11th of last year, I introduced S. Res. 401 along with Senators McCain, Collins, Cornyn, Feingold, Harkin, Leahy, Lugar, and McCaskill. The Senate Resolution, which has been referred to the Rules Committee, would make Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports more accessible to the public over the Internet. CRS reports play an important role in informing Members of the Congress and their staff on critical issues, but are also of interest to the public.

Unfortunately, Congress and CRS' policies have severely limited the public's ability to read these unclassified reports. As a result, there is uneven access among the public, with many companies now profiting from selling CRS reports to those who can afford to pay. While I and other Senators do our best to post reports on our official websites, I believe that Senators and their constituents would benefit from a system which automatically posts and updates reports as they are published or modified by CRS experts. This will ensure that Senators provide updated, and more complete, information to constituents who find these reports beneficial.

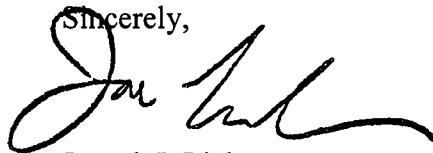
To that end, I was pleased to learn that on February 7th you directed Daniel Mulhollan, the Director of CRS, to develop a system by which Senators will be able to place CRS reports more easily on their official websites. The action you have taken will enhance the ability of Senators to serve their constituents and I appreciate and applaud your efforts in this regard.

However, I also have reservations about the program upon which the new Senate system will be modeled. Your letter directed CRS to make available to Senators capabilities similar to the system already used by Members of the House of Representatives. While that system enables Members to place reports on their official websites, the system is time consuming and requires that each new report be added individually, instead of by topic. CRS has a library that is continually growing and currently consists of more than 2,000 reports. If this model is adopted for the Senate I am concerned that it would remain difficult for Senators to provide a substantial number of reports to their constituents.

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that you direct CRS and the Sergeant at Arms to implement a system that more fully reflects the goals of our legislation. I believe the new system should provide constituents with tools similar to what Congressional staff has, with material presented by topic as well as the capability to search across all reports and issue briefs.

I look forward to working with you to ensure that the principles of government transparency and open access to information, principles that we both embrace, can be fully preserved as this important program moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joe Lieberman", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

Joseph I. Lieberman
Chairman

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