

NGOS TO CONGRESS: DON'T HIDE OUR SECRET GOVERNMENT

I noted last week that the Senate Intelligence Committee had acceded to Director of National Intelligence James Clapper's request that it repeal the requirement that his office produce a yearly report on the number of people with security clearances.

On Tuesday a group of NGOs wrote the Intelligence Committees asking they reverse course and retain the report requirement. They argue, in part, that the report has generated far more attention than typical government reports. And that the report offered the public an unprecedented understanding of the size of the clearance community.

We believe the annual report on security clearances provides exceptional value to the public and should continue to be published.

In the two years that the report has been produced, it has dramatically altered our conception of the size and scale of the personnel security clearance system. Prior to the reporting requirement, the Government Accountability Office could only estimate the number of security cleared personnel, and its latest estimate was low by more than a million clearances. As evidence of the exceptional public interest in this report, we note that the findings of the latest annual report have appeared in the New York Times (July 24), the Washington Post (July 28), and McClatchy Papers (July 27), among others. As you know, this level of attention is well above average for a report to Congress on any topic. Through this annual reporting requirement, your Committees have

provided an unprecedented degree of transparency concerning the security clearance system. We thank you for that, and we respectfully request that you maintain this important reporting requirement.

Let's hope that bit of flattery at the end works. If not, I guess we can conclude that even this tiny bit of transparency on our secret government is deemed too much for mere citizens to have.