

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

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December 13, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Mr. President:

As the year comes to a close, I want to draw your attention to several outstanding requests for information that have been sent by me along with other senior members of the Committee on Science. There are six letters that were sent to you or executive agencies under your direction which have never been substantively responded to and another two letters that received only a partial response. Among the issues I sought further information on are:

- the mismanagement of the National Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellite System acquisition that could lead to a fifty percent increase in the program's costs—as much as a \$3 billion cost overrun;
- the re-writing and editing of a Department of Commerce report on the offshoring of professional jobs that deleted significant analysis from the final product;
- questionable connections between a regulated industry and the National Institute of Health's office that conducts research that supports regulation of that industry;
- the handling of the Federal government's response to Hurricane Katrina, including your own personal participation in the August 28 FEMA-organized briefing on what to expect from the storm making landfall; and
- a request for an accounting on how a new policy at HHS may be hindering international public health contacts as the world prepares for a potential pandemic.

It is hard to see how any of these issues might be termed “unimportant” and difficult to see how withholding information associated with our requests furthers the public interest.

It is impossible to assure citizens that the policies of your administration are soundly based or the programs well managed when we cannot get even the most basic answers to our questions. Our democracy assigns enormous authority to the executive branch to initiate action. However, that authority is to be balanced by accountability to Congress. When our requests for information go unanswered, or are only inadequately addressed, accountability is impossible.

Therefore I ask that you direct your Administration to provide full responses to our outstanding requests (list attached) by January 10, 2006. Further, I ask that you commit to providing complete, timely responses to our letters in the next year. While you attend to the efforts to bring the fruits of democracy to people in distant lands, I am sure you share my desire to see that our own government becomes a model for transparency and accountability, principles that are the essence of democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bart Gordon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

BART GORDON
Ranking Member

Unanswered/Partially Answered Oversight Letters

Date Submitted	Date Response Requested	Date Completed	Nature of Request	Signatures	X
DOE Requests					
10/4/2005	Release report by 10/17/05	10/31/2005 Acknowledgment; promise a release by 1/15/06	Request to release FY2004 report on energy efficiency in federal agencies	Gordon	
FEMA Requests					
9/30/2005	10/5/2005 c.o.b.		Requesting all records relating to Hurricane Liaison Team briefings of Aug. 27/28.	Gordon	
HHS Requests					
4/28/2005	5/12/2005		Rescind policy re: foreign invites to our governmental scientists so that HHS/Sec. office no longer nominates and approves attendees.	Gordon + 10 Science Dems	
COMMERCE Requests					
8/12/2005	8/17/2005	partial response	NOAA—follow-up to 7/28 meeting re: NPOESS	Boehlert, Gordon Ehlers, Wu	
10/7/2005	10/21/2005		Request that NOAA provide all reports produced by staff at HSOC NOAA desk and those sent to NOAA thru Incident Coordination Center for dates 8/26 thru 9/3. DOC asked for the letter to ease "processing" of request.	Gordon	
10/11/2005	10/24/2005	11/22 letter of acknowledgment; not substantively responsive	Follow up to August 3 letter re: releasing report on off-shoring professional jobs in manufacturing and services industries and seeking information on who edited and how the report evolved.	Gordon, Wu Costello	
10/20/2005	11/1/2005	partial response	Follow up to 8/12 letter re: NPOESS requesting documents, etc.	Boehlert, Gordon Ehlers, Wu	
LETTERS TO PRESIDENT					
9/14/2005	9/20/2005 c.o.b.		RE: Max Mayfield (NHC) transcript from Aug. 28; list of others contacted re: Katrina; existing transcripts of conversations with NOAA/NWS/NHC	Gordon	