

From the remarks of **Sen. Hillary Clinton**, speaking to the Newspaper Association of America and the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 4/15/08.

I will restore openness in government. When I'm president, the era of Bush-Cheney secrecy will be over.

You know, on April 27th, 1961, President Kennedy addressed one of the predecessors of this organization, the American Newspaper Publishers Association. The failed invasion of Cuba, known as the Bay of Pigs, had taken place just one week before. President Kennedy spoke of the threat facing the United States. He wrestled publicly with the basic tension that exists whenever our security is threatened between the government's responsibility to keep some secrets and the public's right to know.

But he understood the importance of openness to the integrity and vitality of government -- even in the aftermath of his own failures. He said, "There is little value in opposing the threat of a closed society by imitating its arbitrary restrictions."

And so just days after an embarrassing failure, the president of the United States came before your predecessors, begged for scrutiny, and challenged the nation to mobilize without compromising democratic values.

That kind of open leadership has been sorely lacking these past seven years. In fact, the Bush administration has dramatically widened the definition of classified information to shield more and more material from public scrutiny. It has widened the scope of the state secrets privilege to shield its program from judicial review. And it has widened the reach of executive privilege to shield its activities from Congress.

And from warrantless wiretaps at home to secret prisons overseas, the Bush administration has conducted illegal activities and stonewalled efforts of the people and the Congress to discover them and to hold the administration accountable.

When I am president, I will empower the federal government to operate from a presumption of openness, not secrecy. That's why I am a co-sponsor of the Free Flow of Information Act. Allowing reporters to protect sources helps ensure that whistle blowers can blow the whistle and you can keep the public informed and keep officeholders accountable.

I will direct my administration to prevent needless classification of information that ought to be shared with the public. We will adopt a presumption of openness on Freedom of Information Act requests and urge agencies to release information quickly if disclosure will do no harm.

That was Attorney General Janet Reno's approach, and it will be my attorney general's approach, as well.