

Editorial: Freedom of Information Act upgrade a good start

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The Freedom of Information Act, first enacted in 1966, allows the public to see how their government functions – and fails to function – by providing access to official records. In fiscal year 2013, government agencies released some or all of the information sought in 440,997 requests.

But too often, information that should be released isn't because agencies invoke one of nine exemptions spelled out in the law, ranging from protections for personal privacy to considerations of national security.

Critics have focused especially on the overuse of an exemption for "inter-agency or intra-agency" documents that has come to be known as the "withhold it because you want to" exemption. For example, the CIA invoked that exemption to deny a request for release of a 30-year-old internal history of the 1961 Bay of Pigs operation in Cuba.

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