



New York Coalition



For Open Government, Inc.



## **Groups Urge Legislature to Pass Four Common-Sense Repairs to New York’s Broken Freedom of Information Process**

Transparency and government accountability groups are urging the state Senate and Assembly to pass four common-sense bills to repair the state’s dysfunctional freedom of information process. The Legislature should honor [Sunshine Week](#) (March 16-22) by passing these bills.

The groups say the state’s Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) has weaknesses that are being exploited by government agencies, resulting in massive delays and inconsistent and highly politicized treatment of records requests.

The bills require agencies to report basic information about how many FOIL requests they get and what the public is asking for, reduce the amount of time agencies have to respond to FOIL requests, expand the conditions under which plaintiffs may receive attorneys’ fees, and limit the commercial records FOIL exemption, which is currently permanent. Each of the bills moved in at least one house last year but none passed both houses. The bills are:

1. **Report FOIL Activity ([S452 \(Hoylman-Sigal\)](#) / [A2321 \(McDonald\)](#))** – Passed the Assembly last session.
2. **Strengthen FOIL Attorneys’ Fees ([A950 \(Steck\)](#) / [S1418 \(Liu\)](#))** – Passed the Senate last session.
3. **Reduce Agency FOIL Response Time ([S2520 \(Skoufis\)](#) / [Assembly TK \(Raga\)](#))** – Advanced to third reading in the Senate last session.
4. **Limit Commercial FOIL Exemption ([A1410 \(Rosenthal L\)](#) / [Senate TK \(Hoylman-Sigal\)](#))** – Passed the Senate last session.

“The Legislature has a big opportunity to transform FOIL in 2025, after coming so close last year,” said **Tom Speaker, Legislative Director for Reinvent Albany**. “Both the Senate and Assembly have shown clear interest in reform. It’s time for them to work together.”

“New York State’s Freedom of Information Law is plagued by flaws, loopholes, and easily misinterpreted language,” said **Jerome D. Greco, Digital Forensics Director for The Legal Aid Society**. “The Legislature should pass this slate of bills to strengthen FOIL and take a significant step forward for government transparency.”

“The public’s right to know is the foundation of democracy, yet New York’s open government laws remain weak and unenforced,” said **Axel Ebermann, President of the New York Coalition for Open Government**. “Lawmakers have a duty to strengthen these protections so that government truly serves the people. New Yorkers deserve nothing less.”