

Reinvent Albany
Association of Foreign Press Correspondents
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Legal Aid Society
The Media and Democracy Project
National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
New York Coalition for Open Government
Society of Environmental Journalists
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.)

February 17, 2026

Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate

Speaker Carl Heastie
New York State Assembly

Re: Strengthening FOIL in your FY 2027 one-house budgets

Dear Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Heastie,

We write to urge you to include legislation improving the state's Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) in your one-house budgets.

Both of your houses have done great work moving FOIL legislation last year – most of the bills our coalition supported passed at least one house, and a bill requiring faster agency response times passed both before being vetoed. Unfortunately, Governor Hochul has declined to do anything to fix the law. It is up to the Legislature to advance transparency in New York State.

We urge you to use your one-house budgets to strengthen FOIL in two ways:

1. Include these FOIL bills:
 - a. **Report FOIL Activity** ([S452 \(Sponsor TBD\) / A2321 \(McDonald\)](#)) – Passed the Assembly last session.
 - b. **Limit Commercial FOIL Exemption** ([S5000 \(Sponsor TBD\) / A1410 \(Rosenthal\)](#)) – Passed the Senate last session.
 - c. **Strengthen FOIL Attorneys' Fees** ([A950-A \(Steck\) / S1418-A \(Liu\)](#)) – Passed the Senate last session.
 - d. **Require agencies to allow for electronic appeals (sponsors TBD).**
 - e. **Reduce Agency FOIL Response Time** ([S2520 \(Skoufis\) / A3425 \(Raga\)](#)) – Vetoed by the Governor.

2. Create a grant program for local governments to improve Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) administration, and prioritize improvements to FOIL in your FY 2027 budget if necessary to implement the above legislation. Such a program could also be funded by tweaking grants already in place for records management. We note that the Governor's State of the State announced \$1.1 million in funding for a body-worn camera footage processing unit, but the budget includes no other support for the many agencies and municipalities handling records requests.

Sincerely,

Reinvent Albany
Association of Foreign Press Correspondents
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Legal Aid Society
The Media and Democracy Project
National Press Photographers Association (NPPA)
New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU)
New York Coalition for Open Government
Society of Environmental Journalists
Surveillance Technology Oversight Project (S.T.O.P.)