February 23, 2010

The Honorable Jane Harman
Chair, Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment
Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C 20515

Dear Chairwoman Harman:

We are writing to convey our support of your amendment to require the Inspector General of the Intelligence Community to prepare a report on over-classification.

In its Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, the 9/11 Commission cited the necessity of preventing over-classification by the federal government. Over-classification hinders information sharing, causes information to be inappropriately removed from public access, and causes the government to needlessly spend billions of taxpayer dollars protecting information that should never have been classified. Over-classification also leads to disrespect of the system and leaks to the press, and public suspicion.

It is crucial for the federal government to ensure that information bearing on our national security is shared with the public, to the greatest extent possible. In addition to hindering this goal, over-classification of information impedes the effort to make sure intelligence information gets into the hands of those in the federal government, and state, regional, tribal, and local governments, who need it on a timely basis.

Your amendment takes an important first step toward curbing unnecessary and unwarranted secrecy and we urge its passage.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Center for Democracy and Technology

Federation of American Scientists

OpenTheGovernment.org

National Security Archive

The Constitution Project

Society of Professional Journalists

American Association of Law Libraries

Project on Government Oversight

OMB Watch

The James Madison Project

Open Society Policy Center

American Civil Liberties Union

Liberty Coalition

Special Libraries Association

Center for National Security Studies

Center for Constitutional Rights

David Cole, Professor
Georgetown University Law Center

Bill Leonard, former Director of ISOO