

Senator Patrick Leahy

*The Electron FOIA Amendments of 1996: Reformatting the FOIA for On-line Access*

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Abstract by Meredyth S. Cooper

Senator Leahy discusses many of the significant provisions included in the Electronic Freedom of Information Act (E-FOIA) Amendments of 1996 designed to increase government accessibility and accountability.

Some of the new provisions highlighted include increasing the statutory amount of time required of an agency to respond to a FOIA request to twenty days, mandating agencies comply with the format requested if feasible and encouraging agencies to increase public access via the Internet.

To facilitate individuals seeking information from agencies, the E-FOIA Amendments require agencies to issue guidebooks on how to conduct a FOIA request, to develop an index of the information and records housed by the agency, and to create an expedited process for those who can demonstrate a compelling need for the records they have requested. Senator Leahy argues that these provisions will help reduce the delay in obtaining information from agencies under FOIA and further American democratic goals by enhancing the visibility and accessibility of government information.