

From: [REDACTED]
To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
Subject: please retain and strengthen the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 11:26:08 PM

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Hello Task Force members,

I am a longtime San Franciscan and, relevant for the purposes of this request, an award-winning investigative reporter --- an honor I doubt I would have received without the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force.

I write to urge you to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force be retained as a policy-making body with no sunset date. And if you feel strongly about the necessity of open government, I encourage you to use your political capital to advocate for an even stronger SOTF.

Far too often, reasonable and vital federal FOIA and state Public Records Act requests are delayed, denied, or partially fulfilled for specious reasons. In some cases, public records laws are ignored or violated. When this happens, the only recourse open to a citizen is to go to the courts. And retaining a First Amendment attorney is simply not an option for most people - and, increasingly, most professional media organizations.

The result? There is no government watchdog. Public records - the public's records - become rarefied commodities or stay secret. Wrongdoing continues, accountability suffers, and citizens lose yet more faith and trust in their government.

I do not have to tell you that in 2025, this is a very dangerous prospect indeed.

What sets San Francisco apart - what demonstrates its commitment to open and accountable government - is the SOTF and its power to investigate claims on behalf of all citizens, regardless of their access to disposable resources. This is unique and this is special.

Such power is vital if the promise of open government is to be fulfilled. I know this from experience. In 2019, I was honored by the Society of Professional Journalists for obtaining important records. These records showed just how bad and widespread the environmental fraud was at the biggest real-estate project in the city since the 1906 earthquake. And I obtained these records only via the SOTF.

Participation in civic affairs should not be a rare privilege afforded to the few. The SOTF is a vital tool in keeping our government open and our citizens engaged. The state and federal governments should follow its example. Until they do, San Francisco must not do away or disempower its exceptional accountability mechanism.

I urge you to allow San Francisco to continue to be a model for the rest of the country.

Best,

Chris Roberts

[REDACTED]

San Francisco, CA 94110

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Chris Roberts

Journalist

Cell/Signal/Whatsapp: [REDACTED]

Secure [REDACTED]

@_chrisroberts