

Aliens in Arizona, the Bermuda Triangle, and Area 13:

Answering Controversial Questions from our Users,
Calming Fears, and Promoting Government
Information as Reliable and Accurate



Federal Depository
Library Program

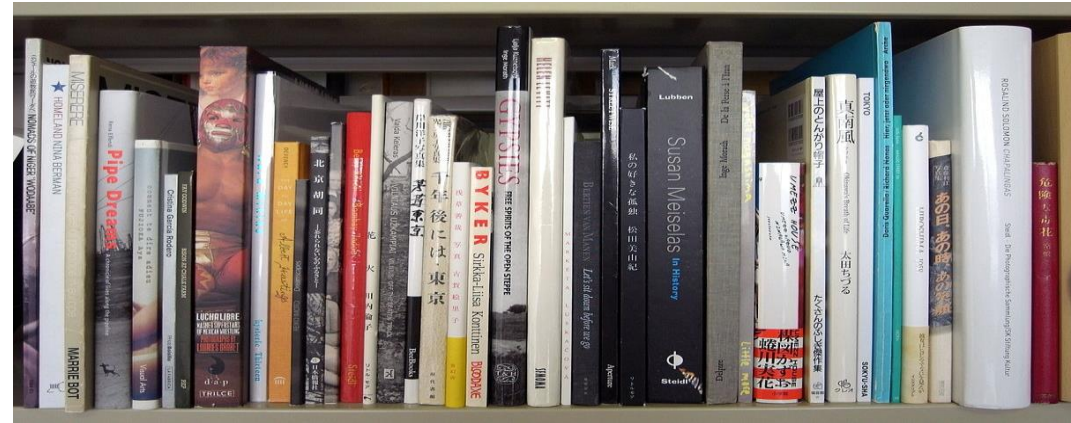
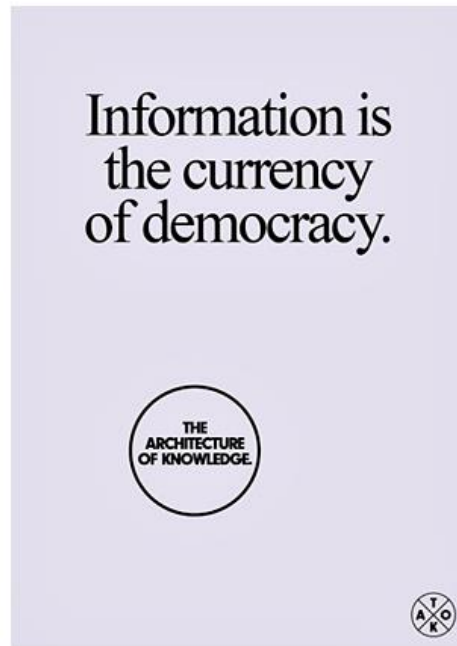
Jane Canfield
Federal Government Information Coordinator
Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico
jcanfield@pucpr.edu
787-841-2000, ext 1806



Why this Webinar?

“The advancement and diffusion of knowledge is the only guardian of true liberty.”

— James Madison



“Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives. A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both”

— James Madison

Why this Webinar?

Libraries should be 'safe spaces' for all users to ask all type of questions

“While libraries have not traditionally used the term “ safe space” to describe themselves or the environments that they create, librarians commit to a code of ethics that, if practiced, would make libraries a safe space for information gathering and exchange. This would involve protecting freedom of expression, fighting censorship, respecting diversity, and protecting individual privacy, for patrons and coworkers alike. If librarians conduct their work with these core values as their framework, then all libraries, ideally, would be safe spaces for learning, teaching, and sharing for everyone.”

https://repository.stcloudstate.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://scholar.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1059&context=lrs_facpubs

What this webinar is:



A compilation of my 40 years of library experience, including 13 years in government information and multiple years as a school librarian, dealing with users who ask controversial questions.

The ideas and advice here are my own and not those of GPO or any political entity.

An offering of respect and admiration for our users who ask the difficult and controversial questions.

What this webinar isn't



People have a lot of different beliefs, and at the end of the day, we all have deeply held beliefs that probably don't make sense to anyone else.

Trey Parker

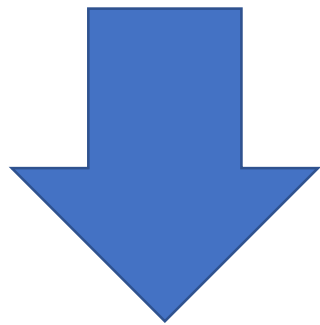
Not a political statement or point-of-view

Not an argument for or against classified information

Not an attempt to discredit government in any way

Not a negative commentary on any controversial issue or question

Why our users ask controversial
questions or believe unproven
ideas and
theories about the government





1. Existence of classified information
2. Mistreatment by a government agent or agency (self, friend, family)
3. Actual government mistakes
4. Inaccurate, incomplete, misleading, or deliberately false news reports and social media posts
5. Genuine need for information on a controversial topic

6. Lack of knowledge of how government works

7. Lack of knowledge about how and where to find government information

8. Lack of knowledge about what the government does and does not publish

9. Mistrust of the government



A blue speech bubble with a white outline, pointing downwards and to the left. Inside the bubble, the text "Some of the controversial issues librarians must respond to:" is written in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

Some of the controversial
issues librarians must
respond to:

<http://www.sdmesa.edu/>



 LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER

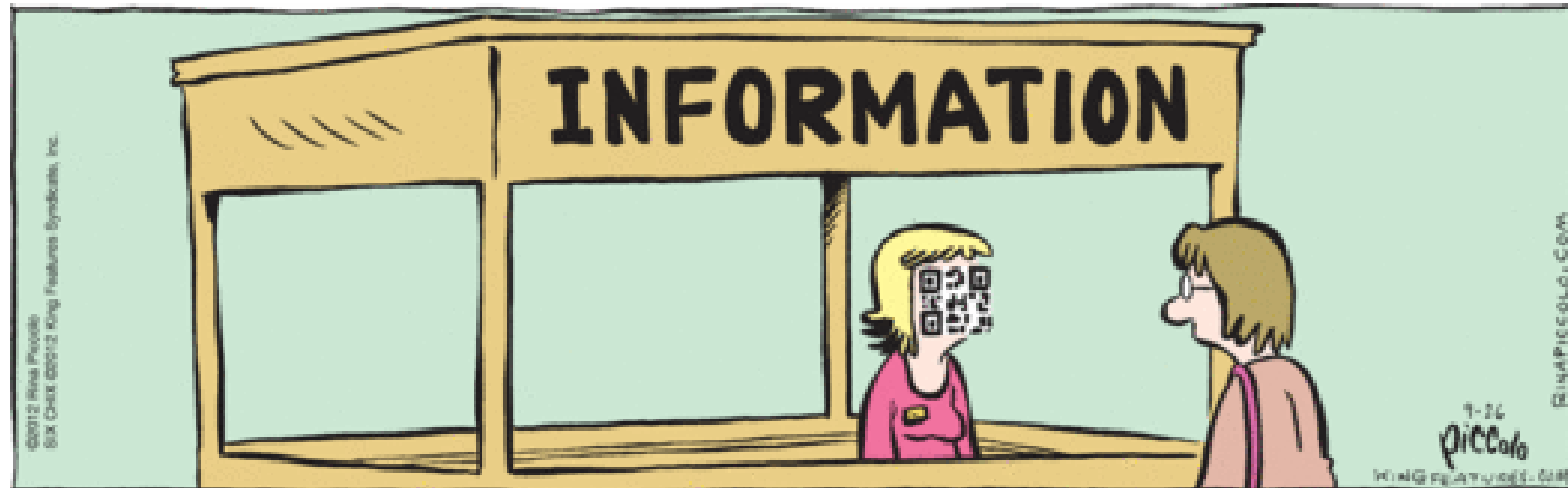
EXAMPLES OF CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES QUESTIONS

1. **ABORTION.** Should underage girls be required to have parental consent? Is abortion an “all or nothing” issue?
2. **ADOPTION.** Under what circumstances, if any, should there be access to adoption records? Should gays be allowed to adopt?
3. **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.** Is it still needed? Is it really quotas in disguise? Is there a way to implement it without “reverse discrimination”?
4. **AIDS.** Should there be mandatory testing? Is the “AIDS epidemic” in the U.S. over? How should the world respond to the AIDS epidemic in Africa?
5. **ALTERNATE LIFESTYLES.** Should unmarried couples have the legal rights of married couples?
6. **BUSINESS.** Should companies be allowed to sell the information in their customer records? Should there be stronger “truth in advertising” laws? Should CEOs be held legally responsible for the frauds committed by their companies?
18. **GUN CONTROL.** Is there a way to preserve second amendment rights while protecting the public? Does the second amendment really protect the right of everyone to have a gun?
19. **HOLOCAUST.** Has it ever happened here? Could it happen here?
20. **HUMAN RIGHTS.** Should they be a factor in our dealings with other countries? What constitute “basic human rights”? The pros and cons of helping “oppressive” regimes who are pro-USA.
21. **ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS.** What is the best way to deal with the problem?
22. **INCOME TAX.** Flat tax vs. graduated tax: the only alternatives?
23. **LITERACY.** What can we do to improve literacy in this country?
24. **MEDIA.** Does watching violence on TV create a more violent child? How does the media portray gender roles/the different races?

7. **CENSORSHIP.** The pros and cons of rating movies, records, TV shows, etc. Should Internet access be filtered? Who should decide what books are used in classrooms/available in libraries?
8. **CHURCH AND STATE.** Has separation gone too far?
9. **COMPUTERS.** How do we reconcile adult rights with the need to protect children? How will privacy be affected by the "information superhighway"?
10. **CRIME.** Victims' vs. defendants' rights. Is "three strikes" working? How do we prevent "identity theft"?
11. **DEATH.** Should a person have "the right to die"? What can be done to curb teen suicides? Should physician-assisted suicide be legal?
12. **DRUGS.** Is it time to try legalization? Should marijuana for medicinal use be permitted? Should all current prescription drugs become "over the counter"?
13. **DRUNK DRIVING.** Is a drunk driver sick or a criminal?
14. **EDUCATION.** Can our public school system be "fixed"? Is using vouchers for parochial schools constitutional? Is home schooling a viable alternative? Is there any value to standardized tests? Is "social promotion" really bad? Is "zero tolerance" a good way to assure safety?
25. **MEDICINE.** Possible ways to cut costs. Should medical care be rationed? Would national insurance lead to socialized medicine?
26. **MILITARY.** Should gays be allowed to serve? Should women be able to hold any military position? How can the military recruit/keep personnel? The pros and cons of consolidating/partially consolidating the branches into one unit.
27. **MULTICULTURALISM.** Is it bringing us together or driving us apart? Should English be made the official language of the US?
28. **POLITICS.** Should tax exempt groups who engage in political activities lose their exemption? How can we encourage more participation in the political process, including voting? How do we ensure a complete and fair census? Should the Electoral College be abolished? Should there be time limits on campaigning? What would constitute true campaign finance reform?
29. **PRIVACY.** Where should privacy begin and end? The pros and cons of Caller ID. How do we keep our privacy in the computer age? What are the implications of "cookies"? Should medical records/any records be "for sale"?
30. **SEX.** Have we taken the concept of sexual harassment too far? Should a rape victim's name be publicized without her consent? Are women still discriminated against?

15. **ENVIRONMENT.** Preserving the environment vs. the need for jobs.
Is global warming really a problem?
16. **FOREIGN AID.** Should we help other countries before helping ourselves?
17. **GENETIC ENGINEERING.** Should human cloning be permitted?

31. **SOCIAL SECURITY.** Should there be a "means test" in order to collect?
32. **SPORTS.** Should municipalities be paying for sports stadia? Is the use of steroids a serious problem?
33. **WELFARE.** Should welfare recipients have to work for their money?



My personal favorite controversial questions



1. Is there a satellite that can push hurricanes away and why won't the government use it?
2. Did oil fracking in the ocean cause the earthquake?
3. How many spies are there on campus?
4. Is there a secret tracking chip in my passport?

The questions sent by Webinar Registrants

Some questions defied classification but many questions were about UFOs and beings from other planets, conspiracy theories and health issues.

1. What are the bad effects of 5G?
2. Did Jimmy Carter see a UFO? Was Jimmy Carter attacked by a swamp rabbit?
3. Is COVID a democratic plot to get back at Trump?
4. Are we mining the moon?
5. Are there funds for doomsday preppers?
6. Are there exotic religious items in the federal archives like the Ark of the covenant?
7. Are trucks emitting dangerous mind-controlling emissions?
8. Has Congress weaponized the weather?
9. What places in the US are under Sharia law?
10. Could I get a list of helicopter black ops?
11. Is there historical literature on people living with dinosaurs?
12. What is the Glomar Explorer?

Respectful treatment for our users



1. Treat the user with courtesy and respect
2. Stay calm
3. Be empathetic without necessarily agreeing
4. Be honest about the limitations and strengths of government information
5. Stay politically neutral. This is not the time to express your personal opinions

We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.

Jimmy Carter

If you ask a controversial question, here is the sequence of steps I will use to guide you:



1. Regular reference interview with emphasis on what information you need, while trying to understand your emotions and beliefs about the question
2. Explain that there are multiple sources of government information with varying points of view
3. Offer access to sites which provide raw data sources if you express an interest in or a need for this data.
4. If you are concerned about reliability or accuracy, I will show you independent websites and organizations which deal with the same question
5. If you express mistrust or lack of confidence in various government sources, I will show you websites for and lists of government monitoring (Watchdog) groups

If you ask a controversial question, here is the sequence of steps I will use to guide you:



6. If you can't find the information you need or it doesn't seem to be available, I will refer you to the FOIA Act website

7. If you are still concerned about government reliability and accuracy, I will also explain some of the internal review and oversight provisions of the government.

8. If you appear to need legal, medical, psychological, or social services aid, I will refer you to the appropriate resources on campus or in the community with as much compassion and empathy as possible.

Here are some of those resources:



CATALOG OF U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS (CGP)

<https://catalog.gpo.gov/>

MetaLib

<https://metalib.gpo.gov/>

The CGP is the finding tool for federal publications that includes descriptive information for historical and current publications as well as direct links to the full document, when available. Users can search by authoring agency, title, subject, and general keywords, or click on "Advanced Search" for more options.

Welcome to MetaLib, a service of the [Catalog of U.S. Government Publications \(CGP\)](https://catalog.gpo.gov/)! MetaLib is a federated search engine that searches multiple U.S. Federal government databases, retrieving reports, articles, and citations while providing direct links to selected resources available online.

CONGRESS.GOV

<https://www.congress.gov/>



<https://www.usa.gov/>

Congress.gov is the official website for U.S. federal legislative information. The site provides access to accurate, timely, and complete legislative information for Members of Congress, legislative agencies, and the public. It is presented by the Library of Congress (LOC) using data from the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Office of the Secretary of the Senate, the Government Publishing Office, Congressional Budget Office, and the LOC's Congressional Research Service.

Our mission is to create and organize timely, needed government information and services and make them accessible anytime, anywhere, via your channel of choice.



<https://www.science.gov/>

Science.gov [searches](#) over 60 databases and over 2,200 scientific websites to provide users with access to more than 200 million pages of authoritative federal science information including research and development results.

<https://eric.ed.gov/>

ERIC indexes education research found in journal articles, books, and grey literature



<https://www.archives.gov/>



The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the nation's record keeper. Of all documents and materials created in the course of business conducted by the United States Federal government, only 1%-3% are so important for legal or historical reasons that they are kept by us forever.



<https://www.neh.gov/>

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is an independent federal agency created in 1965. It is one of the largest funders of humanities programs in the United States.

<https://www.data.gov/>

Here you will find data, tools, and resources to conduct research, develop web and mobile applications, design data visualizations

<https://www.census.gov/>

The Census Bureau's mission is to serve as the nation's leading provider of quality data about its people and economy.

<https://nces.ed.gov/>

The **National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)** is the primary federal entity for collecting and analyzing data related to education.



https://www.foia.gov/

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE



FOIA.gov

Thank you for visiting FOIA.gov, the government's central website for FOIA. We'll continue to make improvements to the site and look forward to your input. Please submit feedback to National.FOIAPortal@usdoj.gov.

[Learn about FOIA](#) ▾

[Before you request](#) ▾

[Create a request](#)

[Agency FOIA data](#) ▾

[Agency login](#)

The basic function of the Freedom of Information Act is to ensure informed citizens, vital to the functioning of a democratic society.

This site can help you determine if filing a FOIA request is the best option for you and help you create your request when you're ready.

[Tips for making a request](#) or

[Start your request](#)



https://www.oversight.gov/

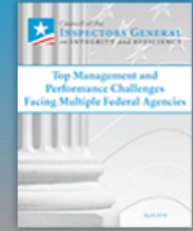


[STAY INFORMED OF NEW REPORTS](#) [REPORT WASTE, FRAUD ABUSE, OR RETALIATION](#)

[REPORTS](#) [INVESTIGATIONS](#) [DISASTER OVERSIGHT](#) [IG VACANCIES](#) [ABOUT](#) [Advanced Search](#)



Top Management and Performance Challenges

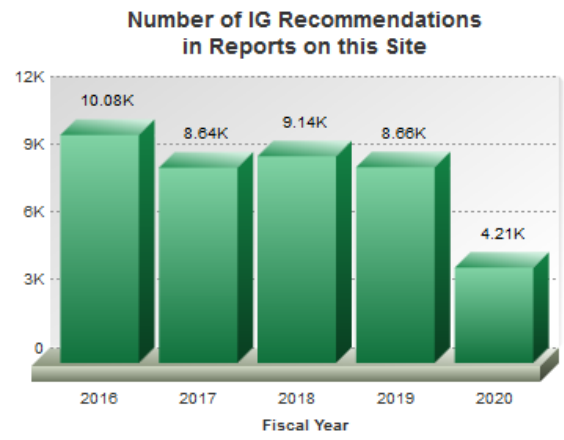
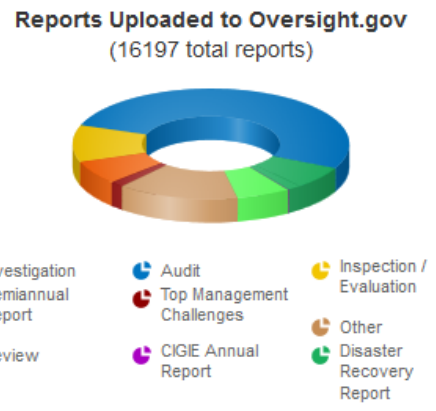
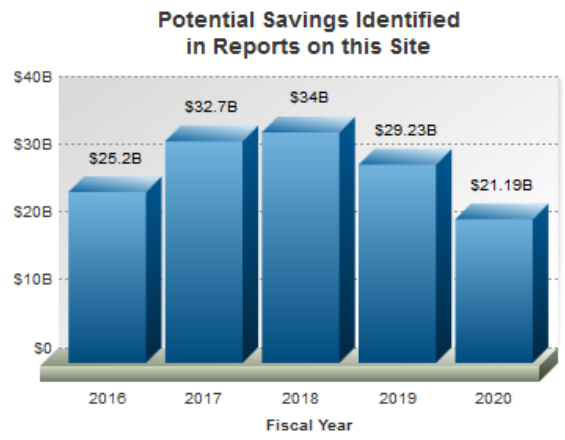


Learn about seven common issues facing federal agencies. Download this report, watch videos, and read testimonies.

What is Oversight.gov?

Oversight.gov is a publicly accessible, searchable website containing the latest public reports from Federal Inspectors General who are members of the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE). The site is operated and maintained by CIGIE. The reports and information are uploaded to this site by the IGs.

[ABOUT CIGIE](#) [ABOUT OVERSIGHT.GOV](#)



What do these charts mean?

https://freegovinfo.info/



freegovinfo.info

FREE GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

Because government information needs to be free

Because Government information needs to be free

[Home](#)

[About](#)

[FGI Library](#)

[Less Access...](#)

[LostDocs](#)

[StateDocs](#)

[Best Titles Ever!](#)

Search



Our mission

Free Government Information (FGI) is a place for initiating dialogue and building consensus among the various players (libraries, government agencies, non-profit organizations, researchers, journalists, etc.) who have a stake in the preservation of and perpetual free access to government information. FGI promotes free government information through collaboration, education, advocacy and research.

Cloud-to-cloud record preservation at the National Archives

July 14, 2020 / [Leave a comment](#)

Here's a very interesting [interview](#) with Leslie Johnston, the director of digital preservation at NARA, in which she describes "cloud-to-cloud" data transfers as a key process to MARA's digital preservation efforts. This is another form of "digital deposit" that we've been discussing in our GPO digital deposit working group and I hope that we in the FDLP community can explore further. It would be so amazing to have a system in place – and legislation to support said system! – to transfer records *from* agencies *to* NARA and publications *from* agencies *to* GPO.

Leslie Johnston, Director of Digital Preservation at the U.S. National Archives, explains how NARA's new Digital Preservation Framework is helping agencies transfer their records to the National Archives cloud as part of a digitization effort driven by law

Latest Posts

[Cloud-to-cloud record preservation at the National Archives](#)

[Final report of 2018-20 FOIA advisory committee now available](#)

[Justice Dept annual FOIA summary report miscalculates FOIA release rate](#)

[HIGH-INCOME NONFILERS OWING BILLIONS OF DOLLARS...](#)

[Threshold Concepts for Government Information](#)

Latest Comments

https://www.muckrock.com/

File, track, and share public records requests.

File a Request

Explore filed requests or learn how it works.

83,120
filed requests

16,359
agencies

24,075
fulfilled requests

5,369,143
released pages

Recently completed requests

See all →

Completed

1 file

Colchester Police call in Burlington

Brian Waters sent this request to the Colchester Police Department of Colchester, VT

Completed

14 files

IDEA implementation in Florida

Thomas Olson sent this request to the Florida Department of Education of Florida

Completed

5 files

County of San Mateo June 2, 2020 Curfew Order (Sheriff's Office)

Patrick Thomas sent this request to the Sheriff's Office of San Mateo County, CA

Completed

5 files

IDEA implementation in Washington State

Thomas Olson sent this request to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction of Washington

Completed

Police data collecti

Samuel Sinyangwe sent this request to the Sparks Police Department


Newsletter

Want the latest investigative and FOIA news?

email address

Subscribe

https://www.pewresearch.org/

 **Pew Research Center**


HOME | U.S. POLITICS | MEDIA & NEWS | SOCIAL TRENDS | RELIGION | INTERNET & TECH | SCIENCE | HISPANICS | GLOBAL | METHODS

PUBLICATIONS | TOPICS | INTERACTIVES | DATASETS | FACT TANK | OUR EXPERTS

POLITICS | JUL 9, 2020

Majority of Public Favors Giving Civilians the Power to Sue Police Officers for Misconduct

While declining shares give police forces positive marks for their use of force, treatment of racial groups and officer accountability, there is little support for cuts in spending on local policing.



FACTANK

NEWS IN THE NUMBERS

JUL 14, 2020
Key facts about digital-native news outlets amid staff cuts, revenue losses

JUL 14, 2020
As the U.S. copes with multiple crises, partisans disagree sharply on severity of problems facing the nation

JUL 14, 2020
Most Americans support gender equality, even if they don't identify as feminists

JUL 13, 2020
Activism on social media varies by race

SOCIAL TRENDS | JUL 7, 2020
A Century After Women Gained the Right To Vote, Majority of Americans See Work To Do on Gender Equality

SCIENCE | JUN 23, 2020
Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should Do More on Climate

11:01 AM

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Government_watchdog_groups_in_the_United_States

Government Watchdog Groups

POGO
PROJECT ON
GOVERNMENT
OVERSIGHT
Exposing Corruption. Exploring Solutions.

<https://www.pogo.org/>

This category includes non-governmental groups in the [United States](#) whose stated mission includes monitoring branches of the state or federal governments for fraud, waste, abuse, corruption, mismanagement, illegal activity, campaign donor influence, abuse of authority, miscarriage of justice,

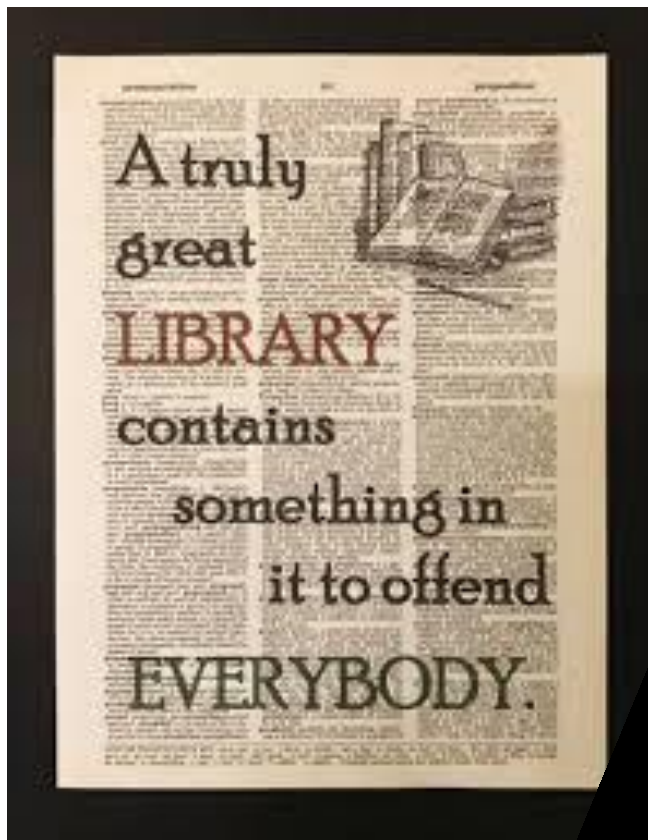
The Project On Government Oversight (POGO) is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that investigates and exposes waste, corruption, abuse of power, and when the government fails to serve the public or silences those who report wrongdoing.

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/>

CREW | citizens for responsibility
and ethics in washington

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW) uses aggressive legal action, in-depth research, and bold communications to reduce the influence of money in politics and help foster a government that is ethical and accountable.

A few favorite quotes



Books are the carriers of civilization. Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill. They are engines of change, windows on the world, "lighthouses erected in the sea of time."

Barbara W. Tuchman