

## The International Program – France



A meeting with Judicial Watch was requested by the Academy for Educational Development, under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Judicial Watch's Director of Investigations and Research, Chris Farrell, met with the French delegates on January 27, 2010, at its headquarters in Washington, DC.

The U.S. Department of State's [country profile](#) reports that "relations between the United States and France are active and friendly," and France remains a close partner with the U.S. in the war on terror. The State Department's project for France, "Counterterrorism and the U.S. Justice System," set forth, in part, the following objectives:

- Examine the principal institutions and actors involved in the U.S. criminal justice system at the federal, state, and local levels; and
- Understand the roles and working relationships among judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement agencies, particularly in the investigative process.

Mr. Farrell was asked to discuss "current programs at Judicial Watch regarding National Security and Terrorism." To provide a framework for Judicial Watch's role vis-à-vis national security, Mr. Farrell provided a brief overview of Judicial Watch's mission and philosophy, with an emphasis on its strategic goal to place "principle over politics" in combating corruption in government.

He informed the delegates that the primary tools employed by Judicial Watch are federal, state, and local open records and open meetings laws. They are, he said, the key to transparency and accountability, and they carry with them the full force of the law. Mr. Farrell noted that the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)—were the [open records laws](#) most frequently employed by Judicial Watch to obtain records from federal agencies of the U.S. government.

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The visiting delegates were involved in legal and prosecutorial efforts related to counterterrorism and extradition matters in France and were interested in learning about Judicial Watch's involvement in similar matters in the United States.

Mr. Farrell advised the delegates that Judicial Watch's role was more often in the form of [representation and protection](#) of individuals holding positions in high government office, who had attempted to sound an alarm within an agency regarding national security failures or to report gross waste, fraud, and abuse. Instead of honoring or rewarding their efforts, these individuals were subjected to retaliation, demotion, and dismissal in an effort to prevent embarrassing revelations.

Judicial Watch believes one of the fundamental roles of government is to defend and protect. When the duty to protect its citizens from terrorist threats at home or abroad has been compromised, Judicial Watch tenaciously pursues government accountability in national security issues.

In example, Mr. Farrell discussed the lawsuit Judicial Watch filed on behalf of Special Agent Robert Wright, who was suspended from the FBI in a retaliatory effort to prevent information uncovered by him from becoming public ([Robert Wright v. the Federal Bureau of Investigation](#)). Mr. Wright had sought, through appropriate channels, to expose incompetence and corruption within the FBI that led to the death of innocent Americans. In an investigation code named "Vulgar Betrayal," he had uncovered money laundering operations by U.S.-based Islamic charities, who were funneling money to the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Even though this investigation led to the seizure of \$1.4 million from U.S.-based Islamic charities destined for terrorist groups, his investigation was shut down, and he was faced with disciplinary action and dismissal. As a result of Judicial Watch's intervention, Special Agent Wright was reinstated in his position, won a court victory, and stands today as an example of courage and fidelity to his oath of office.

As set forth in its Mission Statement, "through its educational endeavors, Judicial Watch advocates high standards of ethics and morality in our nation's public life and seeks to ensure that political and judicial officials do not abuse the powers entrusted to them by the American people. Judicial Watch fulfills its educational mission through litigation, investigations, and public outreach." [The International Program](#) is an integral part of its educational program.