

The International Program

India and Bhutan



A meeting with Judicial Watch president Tom Fitton on September 17, 2010, was requested by the Institute of International Education (IIE), which was hosting a delegation from India and Bhutan, on behalf of the U.S. Department of State. The theme for these International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) guests was “Accountability in Government and Business.”

At the request of IIE, attorney Tom Devine, the Legal Director of the [Government Accountability Project](#), joined Mr. Fitton in addressing the group.

The problem of corruption in government was noted by both presenters to be one of the top concerns of the American electorate.

Mr. Fitton informed the delegates that Judicial Watch’s primary tool to fight corruption in government is the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on the federal level, as well as other open records and sunshine laws at state and local levels. Open records laws were enacted for the very purpose of keeping the government transparent and accountable to the people. However, as Judicial Watch learned, transparency has not been the hallmark of the Clinton, Bush, and Obama administrations. In fact, it has most often taken a protracted legal battle to force the release of documents into the public domain. And this is most assuredly the case when corruption is involved.

Nevertheless, the process itself has given Judicial Watch an invaluable educational role, as it reports on the progress of its cases through all stages of litigation—up to the eventual production of documents and investigatory findings. This is achieved through the use of its Internet site, newsletters, and radio and TV appearances. The process

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exposes government corruption, while at the same time highlighting court decisions that successfully uphold and enforce the rule of law.

Mr. Fitton cited one of Judicial Watch's most significant FOIA lawsuits brought against the Commerce Department as an example of the force and effect of open records laws in uncovering corruption. Although the Commerce Department case began as an investigation into the suspect selection process for trade mission seats, it led to a number of disturbing revelations with serious national security implications regarding [Communist Chinese influence](#) in the White House.

Attorney Tom Devine told the visitors that his organization, also a not-for-profit and non-governmental organization, exists to fight corruption in government as well, but on a different front. It does so as a representative and defender of those who come to his organization to courageously expose government malfeasance. He told the visiting delegates that in having served to enforce and defend the constitutional rights of government whistleblowers since 1979, of "lessons learned," most significant is that "in a free society, there is nothing more powerful than the truth."

This truth is not lost on India, as India and the United States are the world's largest democracies "both committed to political freedom protected by representative government." And according to the U.S. State Department's [Background Notes](#), the U.S. recognizes India as "a key strategic U.S. interest." The [Kingdom of Bhutan](#), although without formal diplomatic relations with the United States, maintains informal contact through the Bhutanese and U.S. Embassies in New Delhi. And the U.S. government "annually brings several Bhutanese participants to the United States through its International and Fulbright Programs."

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.