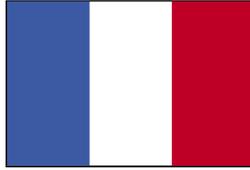


The International Program – France



World Learning Visitor Exchange Program was administering a three-week program on behalf of the U.S. Department of State for a visiting delegate from the Office of International Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters with the Ministry of Justice in France. The program would commence in the nation's capital, followed by two weeks of meetings with law enforcement agencies in El Paso, New Orleans, and Miami in order "to gain a greater understanding of the U.S. correctional system related to criminal cases, and terrorism; and to examine the judicial system function at all levels" (federal, state, county, city, and small municipalities).

The current U.S. Department of State's [country profile](#) reports that "France is a close partner with the U.S. in counterterrorism efforts. It cooperates with the U.S. to monitor and disrupt terrorist groups and has processed numerous U.S. requests for information under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty. French intelligence and security officials continue to actively investigate and prosecute cases of extremism. The French judiciary in December 2007 tried and convicted five French former Guantanamo detainees on terrorism charges. . . ." And relations between France and the U.S. are "active and friendly."

At the request of World Learning, Mr. Fitton was asked to discuss Judicial Watch's mission and activities "in relation to the U.S. judicial system" in order to provide a greater understanding of the role of non-governmental organizations in law enforcement matters. 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.

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Mr. Fitton met with the French delegate at Judicial Watch's headquarters on January 13, 2011, and provided a general overview of Judicial Watch's mission and organizational structure, which he described as similar to that of a "charity" in that it operates as a nonprofit. Its primary role is to provide independent oversight of the government—and its primary tool is the [Freedom of Information Act](#) (FOIA). Records are sought from government agencies when corruption, fraud, or abuse of office and/or violation of federal, state, and local laws have been reported in the media or through other avenues.

Mr. Fitton commented briefly on the corruption scandals Judicial Watch pursued during the [Clinton years](#), which he referred to as "the most corrupt administration in our nation's history," as well as Judicial Watch's legal battle with the Bush Administration over the [Cheney Energy Task Force](#) records. Judicial Watch's lawsuits against both major political parties were widely covered by the mainstream media and largely responsible for Judicial Watch's emergence into the national and international spotlight.

Mr. Fitton discussed current FOIA litigation and investigations into the Obama administration's appointment of radical [czars](#) and the \$200 billion [financial bailout](#) of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which occurred with little Congressional oversight. He ended by discussing the ["Air Pelosi"](#) scandal to illustrate the positive impact open records laws can have on public policy.

Judicial Watch had filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in response to media reports of Speaker Pelosi's abuse of military aircraft for her travels, including to-and-from her home district in San Francisco. Judicial Watch learned through document productions that the "Speaker's military travel cost the United States Air Force \$2,100,744.59 over a two-year period." And even more outrageous, over \$100,000 of that total was for in-flight expenses, including food and alcohol." As widely reported in the press, this was a flagrant waste of taxpayer dollars—and it did not play well with her constituency.

Such bad press, however, did have a positive impact. The November elections ushered in a new "Tea Party" Congress, winning the majority in the House and a change in Speaker. And House Speaker-elect [John Boehner](#) pointedly told his constituents that he would forego the use of military aircraft to fly from Washington

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to his hometown of Ohio to show how serious he was about cutting government waste.