

Priorities for Handling FOIA Requests Suggested

Put in line
Associated Press

Congress should put the media first in line — ahead of businesses and law firms — for government documents sought under the Freedom of Information Act, two journalists' organizations testified yesterday.

Passage of the act in 1967 "has not produced the type of prompt and effective disclosure of government information for the press and the general public that was envisioned," said Jack C. Landau, representing the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and the Society of Professional Journalists.

Landau, testifying before a Senate Governmental Affairs subcommittee, also suggested that the press — which he defined as reporters, editors, writers, researchers, scholars, public advocacy groups and others — be charged a cut rate for processing of its requests.

Due to time and money problems, he said, fewer than 5 percent of the requests are made by journalists, scholars, authors and writers seeking information to disseminate to the public.