

## Abuse of open records requests by activists, corporations threatens government transparency, report shows

Dennis J. Ventry Jr., a law professor at the University of California, Davis, drew the ire of tax preparation companies like Intuit and H&R Block this summer by [criticizing a deal](#) they have to provide a free tax filing service through the Internal Revenue Service. The companies promptly hit back with a .... public records request with the university in July seeking everything Mr. Ventry had written or said about the companies this year ....

**[Editor's note: open records requests are commonly used by anti-GMO groups to harass researchers who study crop biotechnology. See [this GLP story for details.](#)]**

...

A 2017 analysis of requests filed under the Freedom of Information Act found that “public-oriented inquiries by concerned citizens and their advocates” account for “only a small fraction of the 700,000-plus FOIA requests submitted each year,” wrote David Pozen, a law professor at Columbia University .... “The bulk of requests come from businesses seeking to further their own commercial interests by learning about competitors, litigation opponents or the regulatory environment.”

...

But the sheer scale of the requests in recent years, and their growing use by advocacy groups and business interests to challenge academic work at public universities, has alarmed some experts, who say the commitment to openness embodied by freedom of information laws could be tested.

**Read full, original article:** [Industries Turn Freedom of Information Requests on Their Critics](#)