

# ***Government Affairs Openness--“Let Power Run in the Sun”***

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**Abstract:** As the advent of the information age, people have been living in an open era. This paper demonstrates the meaning of government affairs openness from the perspective of times development and politics; introduces five characteristics of the government affairs openness, that is, publicness, democracy, finiteness, authority and advancing with the times; elaborates on three prominent problems in the current work of government affairs disclosure, namely, serious formalism, low public participation and lack of supervision mechanism. Finally, proposed suggestions on how to focus on government affairs openness to ensure it is conducted in an orderly manner from aspects of strengthening organizational leadership, accelerate the legislative process and establish and perfect the supervision system.

## **1. Introduction**

With the improvement of people's material living standard, the public's demand for participating in the governance of social life and guaranteeing the exercise of their rights is increasingly high, which puts forward higher requirements for government affairs openness. It is not only the political needs of the public, but also a political magic weapon to urge government administrative staff to be clean and efficient.

## **2. Definition of Government Affairs Openness**

At present, the exact meaning of government affairs openness still has disagreements among academic circle. Some researchers insist that government affairs openness means the openness of government information, that is the narrow sense of government affairs openness, refers to the information produced or obtained by an administrative organ in the course of performing its duties, which is recorded and preserved in a certain form and released to the public in a timely and accurate manner [1]. Others discuss it from a broad sense, they argue that government affairs openness refers to “The behavior and process of organizations and its staff with administrative duties or public service functions, such as the party organs, the legislature, the government organs, judicial organs, organs of people's political consultative conference, democratic parties, social organizations, public institutions, public service organization, authorization organization, and entrusted organizations,

while publicizing their administrative information produced and obtained to natural persons, legal persons and organizations which have rights in the course of performing administrative duties or public service functions refer to legal procedures. Beyond that, what is expressly required to be kept secret by law shall not be made public.” Therefore, government affairs openness in a narrow sense is conservative, paranoid and static, with emphasis on the results, while in a broad sense it is inclusive, comprehensive and dynamic, taking into account the whole process of the exercise of government power.

In fact, no matter from the angle of era development or politics, government affairs openness should be in a broad sense, that is dynamic, comprehensive and inclusive government affairs openness. From the perspective of era development, since the reform and opening up, China has been embracing the world with an open mind. General secretary Xi has also repeatedly stressed that "the door of China's opening up will only get bigger and bigger", so from this perspective, the opening of government affairs means more than the disclosure of administrative organs' information. More subjects must participate in the process of the openness of government affairs, let the government's rights operate in the sunshine. More people can participate in national governance, so government affairs openness can become an important supervision means to standardize the transparent operation of public power. From a political point of view, China is a socialist country, the essence and core of socialist democracy are that people are the masters of the country. People have the right to know, right to participate, right to express and right to supervise, which urgently requires organizations with administrative duties or public service functions to make government affairs more transparent.

### 3. Characteristics of Government Affairs Openness

Premier Li Keqiang made it clear at the executive meeting on October 31, 2016 that “government affairs openness is a duty that the government must fulfill in accordance with the law. As long as it does not involve national security and other matters, government affairs openness is the norm, and non-openness is the exception!” Government affairs openness has different characteristics in different countries and regions, in the development of democratic politics in contemporary China. Government affairs openness has five basic characteristics: publicness, democracy, finiteness, authority and advancing with the times:

First, publicness. That is, government affairs openness has a clear form carrier can be seen and understood clearly. With the development of the Internet, there are three main forms of government affairs openness in China. One is the new media communication in the form of Internet, WeChat, Weibo, APP, portal and department websites, which has become the main communication tools of government. The second is government physical tool dissemination, set up standardized and unified "open wall" and "open column" at the grassroots level, open "office halls" or "government affairs open centers" in cities and other places where conditions permit, which mainly through the establishment of electronic displays, microcomputer inquiries, service terminals, hotlines and other physical tools to dissemination. The third is traditional media, such as television and newspapers, regularly "government affairs openness" on newspapers, television and radio. By holding press conferences, broadcasting news broadcast, regularly publishing government affairs journals, let the public understand and supervise, so as to make the exercise of public power under the sunshine, using a "visible justice" to ensure the realization of social justice.

Second, democracy. The democratic nature of government affairs openness is determined by the essence of socialism of our country, the position of the people as masters of the country requires the people to have a certain right to know and participate in government affairs, government affairs must be supervised by the people, so that the people can truly participate in the governance of the

country. Government affairs openness is an important guarantee for the people to be masters of their own country. At the same time, the breadth and depth of citizens' political participation is also an important measure to test the development level of a country's democratic politics.

Third, finiteness. The scope of government disclosure is limited, government affairs should be made public to a certain extent, not to the extent that any affairs should be made public to any objects. While safeguarding the people's right to know, government affairs must be made public within a certain legal framework. For content involving the "bottom line" of the law, issues involving state secrets, national security, trade secrets, and personal privacy are prohibited, such as military secrets and defense budgets.

Forth, authority. The implementation subject of government affairs openness is governments and their departments at all levels, it must be a legally established administrative organ recognized by the society, its object orientation is mainly the general public, this requires that it must be authoritative and irreplaceable. The public content of government affairs also must be practical and realistic, must have the characteristics of authority, authenticity, reliability.

Fifth, advancing with the times. Judging from the long history, government affairs openness advancing with the times, different contents should be selected and published in different forms during different periods. Government affairs openness is constantly changing in the process of social development and needs to be constantly developed and improved in practice, it must keep improving according to different requirements of reality with the progress of the times. With the development of society, the form, carrier and content of government affairs openness are also changing, for example, with the arrival of the information age, the way of government affairs openness must be gradually made public on the Internet. With the continuous opening up of our country, some aspects of government affairs openness must be made public across national boundaries.

#### **4. Prominent Problems Facing with Government Affairs Openness**

Since the promulgation of "Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the disclosure of government information", China has made steady progress in making government affairs more open. Government work has become more transparent, and the people's sense of participation and gain has been strengthened. As a whole, China has entered a stage of steady development. In the process of promote government affairs openness, some prominent problems have also been exposed, which have become a stumbling block to the construction of "sunshine project".

##### **4.1. Serious Formalism**

Formalism is mainly manifested in the following two aspects. First of all, at present, various provinces and cities have generally established the assessment mechanism for government affairs openness. Some provinces and cities have incorporated the assessment results into the comprehensive assessment indicators for economic and social development. At the same time, in order to cope with the assessment, while some provinces and cities mechanically copied the assessment indicators to deal with the assessment results but ignored the essence of government affairs openness. Secondly, the quality of the content of government affairs openness is generally not high, the content is too simple and rough, the information is too narrow and outdated, not very timely, and also the exam-taking psychology is serious. It cannot start from the actual situation of the local region to reflect the characteristics of its government affairs openness.

## **4.2. Low Public Participation**

Government affairs openness is the main way for the openness and transparency of government work, participation in national governance is no longer simply a matter between government managers, but also requires the participation of the working people. Without public participation government affairs openness is like a source without water and a tree without roots, all the people have the right to know and the right to participate. Government affairs openness is an effective system and a powerful way to realize citizens' rights of information, participation, expression and supervision. At present, public participation in government affairs openness is low, the open channels according to the application are not smooth enough in some areas, the forms and carriers of information disclosure are relatively single, Weibo and WeChat of government are not updated in a timely manner, public awareness of access to public information is low [2]. Only by let the people participate in the governance of the country and society, can the value of government affairs openness be really reflected.

## **4.3. The Disappearance of the Supervisory Mechanism**

Since the implementation of “Regulations of the People's Republic of China on the disclosure of government information” on May 1, 2008, local governments at all levels could constantly improve the system of openness in government affairs, clearly stipulate the subject, content, form, procedure, supervision and assessment method of government affairs openness, constantly deepen government affairs openness, government affairs service center also develops rapidly. But the government did not make clear the accountability mechanism of government affairs openness, in some local governments, the open supervision mechanism for government affairs is not sound, corresponding punishment measures are lacking, and the administrative accountability system has not been implemented or is not in place. Governments at all levels do not pay enough attention to government affairs openness, lack of supervision and restriction mechanism on government affairs openness, such as omission and misbehavior, and the evaluation and assessment system of government affairs openness is not sound, so it is difficult for ‘government affairs openness’ to play an effective role [3].

## **5. Promotion Strategy of Government Affairs Openness**

### **5.1. Strengthen Organizational Leadership and Actively Promote Government Affairs Openness**

Organizational leadership is the key element of government affairs openness, the orderly development of government affairs disclosure cannot be achieved without organizational leadership. We should further improve the ideological of local government leaders, constantly study the spirit of relevant documents, only by strengthening the thought of leadership can we further enhance the breadth and depth of the work of government affairs openness. It is necessary to further improve the procedures for government affairs openness, make clear the person in charge of government affairs openness in each region. We should also strengthen the propaganda, to raise the public awareness of obtaining public information of government affairs, make good use of the "public resources" of government affairs openness. At the same time, government affairs openness also promotes the clean and efficient administration of administrative staff. Governments at all levels must work around the key and difficult point of government affairs openness, actively mobilize relevant personnel to proactive disclosure and full interpretation of matters and policies related to people's livelihood emphatically, especially sensitive information for the public in the financial sector should

be made public in a timely manner, ensure that government information is ‘transparent and transparent’. Actively promote government affairs disclosure.

## **5.2. Accelerate the Legislative Process on Government Affairs Openness to Further Enhance its Authority**

China's current "regulations of the People's Republic of China on government information disclosure" only belongs to the scope of administrative regulations, the work of government affairs openness has not yet been fully elevated to the level of legislation, its status not prominent enough in China's legal norms system, the law of opening government meetings, the law of opening information of public organs and the law of government in the sunshine in western countries has important reference significance for China's government affairs openness[4]. In fact, government affairs openness conflicts with the interests of administrative staff, only when government affairs openness rises to the level of legislation, can the authority of the work of government affairs openness be further enhanced [5]. Only with a sound system of government affairs openness and a sound guarantee mechanism of government affairs openness can a benign interaction be formed between the government and the public, and a dynamic mechanism is formed for mutual promotion between the two sides, so as to promote the healthy development of government affairs openness.

## **5.3. Establishing and Perfecting the Supervisory Mechanism to Ensure Government Affairs Openness Conducted in an Orderly Manner**

Look from abroad, the federal government of Canada has established the "government information disclosure and privacy protection committee" to supervise the government information disclosure work as a third party, which is independent from the government operation, the British government information office was set up in 2005 to create an independent monitoring body and government information utilization agency [6]. In China, provinces, cities and regions have gradually introduced third-party evaluation agencies as a powerful measure to monitor and evaluate the work of government affairs openness. All localities should link the assessment results of government affairs openness to the assessment and appointment of cadres, and accept the supervision of the people and social media. At the same time, we should improve the accountability system of government affairs openness, administrative staff who fail to disclose information and fulfill their statutory duties will be held accountable. Therefore, to establish and improve the supervision system is a strong guarantee for the orderly development of government affairs openness in various regions.

To sum up, in order to make the work of government affairs openness orderly and efficiently, we can proceed from three aspects: strengthening the leadership of the organization, speeding up the legislative process and establishing and perfecting the supervision mechanism. In addition, we should also proceed with standardizing the work of government affairs openness [7], broaden the channels of government affairs openness and establish a security mechanism, etc. Make government affairs openness effectively, so as to build a service-oriented government.

## **Conflicts of Interests**

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