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Letter to the Editor

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your article "Open Government Wider" (1/5/03), Terry Francke is quoted as saying there is a problem with the Sunshine Ordinance's enforcement provisions. Mr. Francke has it right. When the Alliance for a Clean Waterfront tried to retrieve public documents regarding the erstwhile SFO runway project, SFO was able to onewall for a year the Task Force's decision that the documents should be released. The Task Force's only recourse was to refer the matter to the D.A. The D.A.'s office then courteously explained to the Alliance that the D.A.'s authority under the Sunshine Ordinance was vague and they were not even sure they could go to court. As a result, the Alliance had to take on the burden of enforcement in court. They were lucky, because they found our clinic at Golden Gate University and the first Amendment Project in Oakland, and we won the first court victory under the ordinance, but we can't take on every case, and not every resident seeking records can afford an attorney. The ordinance should be amended to give the Task Force independent counsel with a budget and full authority to vindicate Task Force decisions in court.

Alan Ramo
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