Coalition & Center News

Sunshine Day, Charlotte style
Sunshine Day in North Carolina was celebrated March 18 at the Levine Museum of the New South with a gathering of open government stakeholders. The NCOGC program included three panels on key issues currently on the radar in North Carolina: best practices in complying with e-mail requests, full disclosure of public official salaries, and current open government policies and rulemaking at the federal and state level. At the daylong event, Gov. Beverly Perdue issued a recorded video statement announcing her intent to support a law increasing access to information about deaths in state facilities (see related info below in the "Raleigh Roundup"). Perdue also issued an earlier proclamation declaring March 15 – 21 Sunshine Week in North Carolina.

Click here to see photos from the event and hear selected audio from the panels: http://www.ncopengov.org

Click here for a program of Sunshine Day 2009: http://www.ncopengov.org

Enhancing accessibility
We are working to enhance access to sunshine statutes and bills through the NCOGC & Sunshine Center Web site. You can link directly to North Carolina statutes by visiting the "In N.C." portion of our Web site and clicking on the desired statute in the drop down menu: http://www.elon.edu/e-web/academics/communications/ncopengov/innc/

You can retrieve the full range of media law statutes section by section, courtesy of Everett, Gaskins, Hancock & Stevens, LLP: http://www.eghs.com/medialaw/statutes-cases.asp?tree=statutes

Access Update

Access denied: NCOGC formally challenges secrecy of legislators' correspondence
North Carolina Open Government Coalition President Hugh Stevens has formally challenged a legislative attorney's opinion that communications between a member of the General Assembly and a constituent are not public records. Stevens cites a 2002 opinion issued by the state attorney general's office that concluded, "In sum ... communications between legislators and members of the public about redistricting issues are generally public records ... (and) each legislator is properly treated as the custodian of his or her e-mail communications."

**NCPA warns changes to public notices will cut access for poorest**

The North Carolina Press Association and others are deeply concerned about the effects of proposed legislation to allow Internet-only posting of public notices as opposed to requiring publication in local newspapers. The NCPA has authored a white paper and says on its Web site, "The state's own studies show a widespread lack of access to the Internet, which leaves the poorest North Carolinians out in the cold when it comes to their right to know what their government is doing." Tap into NCPA resources on the proposed legislation at: [http://www.ncpress.com/ebackgroundsite/ebackgroundlegislature/ebackgroundleg09.html#legals](http://www.ncpress.com/ebackgroundsite/ebackgroundlegislature/ebackgroundleg09.html#legals)

**ACLU, Alamance Co. negotiate release of public records**

The American Civil Liberties Union of North Carolina and the Alamance County Sheriff's Department have been negotiating over release of documentation relating to the immigration enforcement program, known as 287 (g). In the latest of several developments, the ACLU is disputing the sheriff's pricing of the public records. State law offers mediation of cost disputes through the state chief information officer. For the latest, see coverage by The Times-News at: [http://www.thetimesnews.com/news/documents_24511___article.html/county_parker.html](http://www.thetimesnews.com/news/documents_24511___article.html/county_parker.html)


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**Raleigh Roundup**

**Gov. opens book on state government**

On her first day in office, Gov. Bev Perdue signed an executive order that is now behind a new state sponsored Web site, NC OpenBook. The site comprises the basic framework for connecting to a wealth of administrative data as well as routine information, such as press releases. Click here to visit the NC OpenBook site: [http://www.ncopenbook.gov/](http://www.ncopenbook.gov/)

Read Times-News coverage of the launch of the Web site at: [http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=936489](http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=936489)

**Multiple bills on media include sunshine statutes**

Legislators have introduced a wide range of bills pertaining to the media in the 2009 session, several of which affect state sunshine statutes. There are multiple versions of some bills, such as those to redress the failure of courts to award attorneys' fees to plaintiffs who win public records lawsuits. Other bills seek to establish mediation for public records disputes, require taping of executive sessions, and increase access to information about deaths in state facilities. Here's a collection of valuable links to help stay on top of pending legislation.


The North Carolina Press Association tracks bills related to all facets of media law. "The e-Background" can be found at the NCPA site at: [http://www.ncpress.com/ebackgroundsite/ebackgroundlegislature/ebackgroundleg09.html](http://www.ncpress.com/ebackgroundsite/ebackgroundlegislature/ebackgroundleg09.html)

Copies of five of the new bills can be found at the NCOGC/Sunshine Center home page under "Bills before the N.C. State Legislature" at: [http://www.ncopengov.org](http://www.ncopengov.org)
Retrieve any statute or bill from the North Carolina Legislature site:  
http://www.ncleg.net/gascripts/Statutes/Statutes.asp

Read the Citizen-Times editorial on new legislation at:  
http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=936654

© 2009 N.C. Open Government Coalition  
Elon University  
School of Communications  
CBX 2850  
Elon, NC 27244  
(336) 278-5506  
ncopengov@elon.edu