

# Sun-e Briefs • May 2010

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**Sun-e Briefs** are a service of the Sunshine Center made possible through a grant from the Knight Foundation. This monthly news update will keep you in the open-government loop by bringing you news about access issues from across the state and updates on the Sunshine Center and North Carolina Open Government Coalition. Coming to you from Elon University, home of the Sunshine Center, we think you'll find **Sun-e Briefs** a valuable addition to your inbox. If you would like to contact us to let us know about a story or to remove your name from our list, please write [ncopengov@elon.edu](mailto:ncopengov@elon.edu).

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## Coalition News

### **NCOGC meets Knight Foundation challenge to help ensure future transparency in Carolina**

The North Carolina Open Government Coalition, a nonpartisan group that educates people about their rights through the Sunshine Center and supports public efforts to gain access to government activity, records and meetings, has raised \$250,000 to match the challenge grant awarded by the Knight Foundation. The grant makes it possible for the NCOGC board to establish a trust fund that will endow the basic operational needs of the organization. The NCOGC and Sunshine Center need your continued support to promote transparency throughout the state. Please send your gift to:

The Sunshine Center, North Carolina Open Government Coalition  
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## Access Update

### **Campbell U. students audit access to records in Carolina**

• Study finds three-quarters not compliant with public records statutes  
Among North Carolina's 100 counties, only one-quarter provided all four public documents requested in an audit conducted by students at Campbell University. The audit was a class project in quantitative research methods for an upper-division course in communication studies. NCOGC Board president Hugh Stevens traveled to

CU and served as an expert discussant of the findings when students presented the audit May 4. To read the full report of the audit and details on the presentation, visit: <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=945347>

For a related commentary by Fayetteville Observer Executive Editor Mike Arnholt, who also served as a discussant, see "Campbell students shine some light," at: <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=946123>

### **Morrisville mulls own open meetings policies in wake of trouble in Wake County**

"Fervor over the Wake County school board — and whether its members violated the state's Open Meetings Law by not moving recent meetings to accommodate large crowds — have spread to Morrisville," reports the Cary News. See the full story at: <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=946124>

For a related story on the dismissal of the ACLU's lawsuit against Wake County Schools, see Raleigh News & Observer coverage, "Wake school board lawsuit dismissed," at: <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=945945>

### **Easley aide says he was told to shred letter**

A top state public information officer says that he was directed by close staff of former Gov. Mike Easley to shred a letter that had been sent in 2007 to Easley from the mayor of Southport. See Raleigh News & Observer coverage of this story at: <http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=946115>

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## **Sunshine Center in Action**

### **NCOGC Sunshine Center joins state coalitions at annual national FOI summit**

The long-awaited federal ombuds office, established by Congress in 2007 to help ensure transparency in Washington, D.C., finally took form in 2009 under the direction of Miriam M. Nisbet, a UNC Chapel Hill alumna. Nisbet delivered the keynote address at the 2010 Freedom of Information Summit in Arlington, Va., an assembly of state open government coalitions from across the United States. The Sunshine Center of the NCOGC represented North Carolina at the event, which included sessions on trends in FOI litigation and transparency in the digital age.

Nisbet's talk focused on improvements in transparency – and the challenges that remain – since she was appointed director of the Office of Government Information Services in the National Archives and Records Administration. Her keynote address and blogs covering other presentations at the 2010 FOI Summit are available through the National Freedom of Information Coalition at:

<http://www.nfoic.org/2010-summit-wrap-up>

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## **Legislative watch**

### **Short session bills seek to close some records, open others**

The 2010 General Assembly went into short session May 11 with several open government bills before legislators, including:

- Legislator confidentiality: a bill that would declare records of communications between legislators and their staffs confidential
- Electronic public notices: would allow the town of Clayton to issue electronic public notices for some public hearings
- Personnel files: seeks to expand information available in public employees' personnel files
- The Open Government Act: would provide mediation for open government disputes and entitle prevailing plaintiffs to recover attorneys fees in public records lawsuits

The North Carolina Press Association carefully tracks bills before the General Assembly, which it makes available through its Legislative e-Background site at: <http://www.ncpress.com/ebackgroundsite/ebackgroundlegislature/ebackgroundleg10.html>

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