

Sun-e Briefs • February 2010

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.

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Sunshine Center in Action

Register now: Sunshine Day shines spotlight on transparency

The NCOGC will shine the spotlight on public access March 16 in Greensboro with Sunshine Day 2010, and registration is now open. The day's events begin at 12:30 p.m. with a luncheon at the International Civil Rights Center & Museum. In the afternoon, leading professionals and experts will explore the year's biggest stories fueled by open government, examine investigative journalism, and review the City of Greensboro's public records protocol. The day's events culminate at 7 p.m. at the Carolina Theatre in downtown Greensboro with Nina Totenberg, NPR legal affairs correspondent. Totenberg will deliver the Joseph M. Bryan Distinguished Leadership Lecture, sponsored by the Elon University School of Law.

To register for Sunshine Day, click here:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8KPDTQL>

To view the day's schedule, visit:

<http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/academics/communications/ncopengov/sunshineday2010agenda.pdf>

To visit International Civil Rights Center & Museum, go to:

<http://www.sitinmovement.org>

To visit the Carolina Theatre, see:

<http://www.carolinatheatre.com/>

Coalition, Center continue call for crucial support

With your help, the NCOGC and Sunshine Center promote transparency in government throughout North Carolina and raise public awareness of access laws and issues. Your support makes the work of the NCOGC and Sunshine Center possible — and there has never been a time support has been more essential. We are close to reaching the required matching funds to secure a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, which will help provide very basic — but much-needed — operational funds.

Every dollar you give will be matched by the Knight Foundation. Please provide your crucial support and make gifts payable to the "North Carolina Open Government Coalition." Mail your gift to:

The Sunshine Center, North Carolina Open Government Coalition
Elon University School of Communications
2850 Campus Box
Elon, NC 27244-2010

(336)278-5506
ncopengov@elon.edu

Please see this important appeal from NCOGC Board president Hugh Stevens at:
<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=942099>

Sunshine Center helps North Carolina's college media with police reporting access issues

College media from around the state gathered Feb. 22 at Elon University for the North Carolina College Media Association Conference. Monica Hill of UNC-Chapel Hill and secretary of the NCOGC Board of Directors coordinated the event with Sunshine Center Webmaster Colin Donohue. Donohue is faculty adviser to The Pendulum, Elon's student newspaper. Sunshine Center Assistant Director Dale Harrison led a session for the collegiate press that explored state and federal laws governing access to information from police agencies both on and off campus. Harrison is a member of the Elon University faculty. Other sessions featured topics from reporting poll results to the business of media, photography, and social and multimedia.

For a rundown on the day's events, see:
<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=943422>

Access Update

Governor demands transparency after predecessor's secret e-mail account exposed

The Durham Herald-Sun reports Gov. Beverly Perdue told city and county managers from around the state they must follow the law and operate open governments. "You've got to be transparent," she said at an annual seminar for city and county managers Feb. 3. "If you're not opening up everything you do in your city or your county, you ought to open it up. In this kind of day and age, everybody understands that the work you do and I do is public business. There is no 'behind closed doors.' There are no more dinners. All of that is history. We live in a different time."

Read the Durham Herald-Sun story at:
<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=943036>

See the Jacksonville Daily News editorial at:
<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=943038>

Newspaper calls for uniform public records standards

In seeking public records, the Asheville Citizen-Times found wide variance in the speed and thoroughness of responses it received from local public agencies. The newspaper is calling on North Carolina to adopt clear statutory standards that require agencies to fulfill public records requests within a specific time. The newspaper compares similar laws in neighboring states.

See the full appeal in the Citizen-Times at:

<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=942810>

Mecklenburg may retrench on popular online public records

Although Mecklenburg County's online property records are popular with residents, the county is considering stripping the site of one of its most easy-to-use features. Some say the current Web site helps promote openness and transparency within government, including letting people know who pays local taxes. Others say it invites abuse.

See the Charlotte Observer story at:

<http://www.elon.edu/e-net/Note.aspx?id=943323>

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