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# The Sunshine Report: *Online*

## Transparency news from the Virginia Coalition for Open Government

### June 2012

#### In this issue

[FOIA Council creates workgroups](#)

[Access, with a side of snide](#)

[VCOG on state integrity rankings](#)

[Open government news](#)

#### Coalition News

#### Recently on VCOG Blog

- [Civil penalties are there for a reason](#)
- [Campaign finance: open to your own conclusions](#)
- [Carve outs carve up access to public records](#)
- [Keep focus on the access issue](#)

*The VCOG Blog is a weekly post on [VCOG's website](#). The columns are also a regular feature on the [McLean Patch](#) and 15 other Patch outlets in Northern Virginia*

#### VCOG in Williamsburg

On May 30, VCOG presented an "Open Government in Williamsburg" program in partnership with the city and the *Virginia Gazette*. [Contact Megan](#)

#### Greetings, Friend of VCOG!

#### E-meetings, Parole Board records on FOIA Council agenda

The Virginia Freedom of Information Advisory Council created two workgroups to study bills referred to it by the General Assembly.

One workgroup will examine how much (if any) of the Parole Board's so-called guidance documents (those records that outline the policies, procedures and factors that go into any given decision on parole) should be open. Del. Patrick Hope is behind the original bill, and he told the council at its May 23 meeting that he was not seeking to open records related to any identifiable individuals.

The other workgroup will revisit the rules surrounding use of electronic meetings by state and local public bodies. The current rules are the result of two prior FOIA Council workgroups, but the council agreed it was a good idea to review the rules in light of newer technological advances. The study was prompted by two different bills offered by Del. Tag Greason and Del. Mark Dudenhefer.

The Joint Commission on Science and Technology has indicated it will study electronic meetings in the coming year, too.

[Click here to read VCOG's take on e-meetings](#) (use technology to increase public participation, but not as a substitute for face-to-face communication).

#### Access, with a side of snide

ABC News reporter Tim O'Brien -- and the general public -- have a right to view records in the controversial case of Daryl Atkins, but the judge of the court where the

[Rhyne](#) to schedule a similar community program in your area.

## Dalglis to head UM journalism program

Lucy Dalglis, director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press and a longtime VCOG board member, has been appointed dean of the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland.

## Rhyne named to National FOI board

VCOG Executive Director Megan Rhyne has been appointed to the [National FOI Coalition](#) Board of Directors for a three-year term starting July 1.

## Stay up to date on access

Sign up for VCOG's [daily listserv on access and First Amendment news](#) from Virginia and across the country. It's free!

For a steady stream of access-related stories and additional commentary and information, join the more than 400 people who are following [VCOG on Twitter](#). The latest six posts are also carried on [our website](#).

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records reside wasn't going to let O'Brien see the records without giving him a piece of his mind first.

[As reported by The Daily Press](#), York-Poquoson Circuit Judge Richard AtLee Jr. told O'Brien he'd "displayed a staggering amount of temerity" in going to the media and the Virginia Supreme Court when he was not granted access to the records during an earlier trip to the courthouse. He faulted O'Brien for not articulating an educational purpose for viewing the case photos.

Atkins' case ultimately led to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling that it is cruel and unusual to execute a mentally retarded defendant.

## VCOG on State Integrity Investigation

When Virginia received an "F" by the State Integrity Investigation for its alleged "susceptibility to corruption," there was much wringing of hands and gnashing of teeth.

The rankings highlighted an important fact that clean government is the product of many interrelated factors, from procurement processes and lobbyist disclosure to access to information and ethics commissions. Virginia was found lacking in these latter two.

VCOG Executive Director agrees that there is always room to improve, but in a [piece written at the request of the investigation's authors](#), she argued that there were many positive aspects to Virginia's laws on access and its overall culture of openness.

Rhyne also had the chance to talk about the study and related issues -- campaign finance and a part-time legislature -- with the investigation's director and David Poole of the Virginia Public Access Project on the ["HearSay with Cathy Lewis" radio program on WHRV](#).

## Open government news

[According to the Loudoun Times](#), local citizens trying to attend a board of supervisors meeting about the county's policy for holiday displays on the courthouse grounds were greeted by locked doors and a sign on the door announcing a closed meeting in progress. A [reporter for the Leesburg Patch](#) later insisted nothing nefarious was afoot and that it was "an honest mistake."...[The Sorensen Institute](#) announced the launch of the Emerging Leaders Program, a leadership development program for young Virginia residents who have a background in state government and are interested in becoming more active in public policy and public service....An amendment to the state budget will insure that reports on 78 convicted people whose DNA was

excluded in Virginia's post-conviction testing project [will be released under FOIA](#)....After catching some flack for a supervisor's intent to charge \$155/hour for the eight hours of time he would have to take off from his day job to search his email in response to a FOIA request, the Stafford County Board of Supervisors wisely [adopted a new policy](#) that limits hourly rates to a person's salary from the county....FOIA requests and their responses [will be posted on Accomack County's website](#) following a 38-page request asking for 21 categories of documents filed by a Chincoteague resident....The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Arlington County did [not violate a business owner's First Amendment](#) rights when it demanded she cover up a 960-square-foot mural that related to her dog day-care business....The *Virginian-Pilot* was [slapped with a \\$3 million libel verdict](#) by a Chesapeake jury for a report that the son of a high school assistant principal was not disciplined by the school following his arrest for felony assault. The paper insists what they wrote was true.

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*Our IRS W9 form [can be found here](#),  
and feel free to ask for a copy of our IRS 990 and our FY10-11 financial audit*

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