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The Sunshine Report: Online Transparency news from the Virginia Coalition for Open Government **November 2011**

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Coalition News

Recently on the VCOG Blog

- [An embarrassment of riches?](#)
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- [Back-channel business \(McLean Patch link\)](#)

Records-management seminar

VCOG will hold its third seminar on records-management and FOIA, Thursday, Nov. 10, at Gannett's headquarters in McLean. The seminar is geared towards government employees, but anyone is welcome to attend. [For details, or to register, click here.](#)

Good-bye to a board member

Waldo Jaquith, the brains behind Richmond Sunlight and Virginia Decoded (in progress), is stepping down from the VCOG board of directors to take a job with the White House. Jaquith will now be the brains behind Ethics.gov, a

Greetings, Friend of VCOG!

ACCESS 2011 - Monticello

A snowy(!), gray morning yielded to afternoon sun on Mr. Jefferson's mountain, Saturday, Oct. 29, as several dozen citizens, journalists and even a politician or two, joined VCOG in discussing open government issues of the day at Access 2011.

The morning at Monticello started with a "reverse press conference," where local elected and appointed officials asked questions of local journalists about access. Local library board member Gary



Grant challenged the reporters to keep regular tabs on government officials by routinely asking for or monitoring their email. In turn, all three from the press side (Henry Graff of WVIR, Rob Schilling of The Schilling Show and Hawes Spencer of The Hook) said they felt they had nothing to hide if their email was required to be public (barring constitutional protection, of course! *(Pictured above: Maria Everett, FOIA Council; Ann Mallek, Albemarle Board of Supervisors; Gary Grant, Jefferson-Madison Regional Library Board; and Eric Strucko, Albemarle School Board.)*



Roger Christman from the Library of Virginia (at left) gave a presentation on his work in archiving and making searchable the estimated 1.5 million email from the Governor Tim Kaine administration. He showed sample message

from when news of the Virginia Tech shootings first

website of lobbying reports, ethics records and campaign-finance filings. Jaquith has served on the board since 2008. Thanks, Waldo, and good luck!

VCOG on the road

It was a busy October for VCOG. There were FOIA Council subcommittees, radio interviews, oral arguments at the 4th Circuit and a presentation at the Free Expression Network in D.C., not to mention our annual conference and our fundraiser. To schedule a panel or training session, [contact Megan Rhyne](#).

THANK YOU to our Access 11 conference sponsors:

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- Virginia Press Women
- Virginia Public Access Project
- Virginia Trial Lawyers Association
- The Virginian-Pilot
- Joe Walton
- W&L journalism department
- WTVR, CBS-6, Richmond
- WWBT, NBC-12, Richmond

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

trickled in, and he talked about how the decisions he makes about what to disclose and what to withhold from the archive will affect the library's relationship with future governors.

Things got a little heated (pardon the pun) when representatives of the American Tradition Institute and the Union of Concerned Scientists sparred over ATI's FOIA request for emails from former UVA climate-science professor

Michael Mann. Though both agreed that UVA has not responded properly under Virginia law, they disagreed over whether the law of this or any state should be amended to give more protection to scientists in the name of academic freedom. (Pictured above: *Christian Trejbal* of *The Roanoke Times*, the moderator; *Chris Horner* of the *American Tradition Institute*; and *Michael Halpern* of the *Union of Concerned Scientists*.)



2011 Open Government Award winners recognized



At its annual conference at Monticello, Oct. 29, VCOG presented its annual awards to citizens, media and government making a difference to FOIA and access to government in Virginia. Jill DeMello Hill

(pictured here with VCOG director Megan Rhyne) received the Laurence E. Richardson citizen award; *The Roanoke Times* was recognized in the media category, and Delegates Jim LeMunyon (R-Chantilly) and Mark Keam (D-Vienna) shared the government prize. To learn more about what they did to deserve recognition, [click here](#).

A grand tribute to a grand man



Nearly 200 luminaries, from comedians and actresses, to First Amendment scholars, U.S. Supreme Court correspondents and Virginia governors, joined together to pay tribute to Bob O'Neil, VCOG's founding president (not to mention the former head of the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression, a former president of UVA and a

[our website.](#)

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REALLY LIKE US!
(but won't you like us more?)**



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former clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice William Brennan). All praised O'Neil's intellect and influence, as well as his humility and integrity.

For a recap of the night's events, [click on this story from C-Ville.](#)

The event raised over \$50,000 for VCOG's endowment and a conference to be established by the TJCenter in Bob's name. To add your contribution, please contact [Josh Wheeler](#) at the TJCenter or [Megan Rhyne](#) at VCOG.

Open government news

VCOG filed [a friend-of-the-court brief](#) asking the 4th Circuit to uphold a federal district court ruling in Norfolk that rejected voter applications must be disclosed under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993....Two Pittsylvania County citizens were taken to task by a member of the board of supervisors for sitting in a room adjoining the room where the board was meeting in closed session. The supervisor worried about the board members' safety and complained that the citizens came to meetings [just to "pick at" the board](#)....The father of a 13-year-old autistic boy is suing Bedford County after viewing [videos obtained through FOIA](#) that showed a bus driver and a driver's aide slapping the boy....Governor Bob McDonnell's office notified the Democratic Party of Virginia that [it would cost \\$1,622,58 to produce records](#) related to the government reform commission's closed-door workgroup meetings. The governor's office said it was one of the largest FOIA requests it had received....The Giles County School Board is seeking to [unmask the two anonymous students](#) suing over the display of the Ten Commandments at Narrows High School. The students filed the lawsuit using the names Doe 1 and Doe 2....Members of the Fredericksburg City Council once again [held a meeting in a location where photography was not permitted](#), even after the law was amended in 2010 to specifically prohibit this, and even after the city council was criticized for doing the same thing back in January.

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