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

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## Coalition News

### What's in a name?

At its most recent board meeting, the VCOG Board of Directors voted to name the VCOG Endowment after VCOG's founding director and current board member Forrest M. "Frosty" Landon. Landon spearheaded the fundraising effort that led to the endowment's establishment in 2006.

### Nominate your FOIA hero

This is the last call for nominations for VCOG's annual FOI awards, given to citizens, media and government. Go to the [nomination form](#) on our home page to recognize someone who has brought sunshine to the Commonwealth.

### VCOG on the road

During August, VCOG had the opportunity to conduct FOIA training sessions at the student-run newspapers of James Madison University and Virginia

Greetings, Friend of VCOG!

## ACCESS 2011 - Monticello

Thomas Jefferson's historic home on the bucolic hill will be the backdrop for VCOG's 12th conference on access and open government in Virginia. Join us Oct. 29 at Monticello for a panel on access to campus email, featuring key players in the dispute over UVa's response to a FOIA request for a former professor's email. Another panel will feature local public officials grilling journalists on the use (and abuse?) of access laws. VCOG will acknowledge its annual award winners, and the staff of the Thomas Jefferson Foundation will be on hand with a presentation, too

[Click here for registration information](#), and THANK YOU to our sponsors so far:

- Alpha Omega Wealth Management
- Society of Professional Journalists, Virginia Pro Chapter
- Virginia Lawyers Weekly
- Virginia Trial Lawyers Association
- WTVR, CBS-6, Richmond

[Contact Megan Rhyne](#) for sponsorship information.

## A Tribute to Robert M. O'Neil

Don your finest attire Oct. 29 to pay tribute to a great hero of open government and free expression, Bob O'Neil. Bob is VCOG's founding president, and the retiring founder of the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free



I ech. VCOG salutes these schools and these students, both of whom realize that it's never too early to embrace the values of an open, transparent government.

### Rejected Voter Applications

The VCOG Board of Directors has recommended that VCOG file a friend of the court brief in the 4th Circuit case over access to rejected voter registration applications. A federal district court in Norfolk said the state law prohibiting access to the applications conflicted with a federal law that expressly allowed access (provided SSNs were redacted). A brief in support of the right of access is due mid-October.

### 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](#).

Expression. Tickets are \$150. Individual sponsorships are from \$250 to \$1,000, and tables can be purchased starting at \$2,500. Proceeds will benefit the VCOG endowment, and a symposium series by the Thomas Jefferson Center in Bob's name.



For details, [click here](#) or on the image.

## FOIA Council's FOIA Roadshows

The Freedom of Information Advisory Council will embark on its bi-annual series of FOIA training events, affectionately dubbed "The Roadshows."

Included are a primer on making and responding to FOIA requests, new strategies for managing electronic records, navigating FOIA's open meetings provisions and dealing with law enforcement records.

Catch a Roadshow in your area:

- Sept. 07 - Wytheville
- Sept. 08 - Weyers Cave
- Sept. 09 - Sterling
- Sept. 19 - Danville
- Sept. 20 - Richmond
- Sept. 22 - Chesapeake
- Oct. 13 - Richmond

[Get more details and register here.](#)

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



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## Open government news

The FOIA Council [ruled on the last day of August](#) that section 40.1-11 of the Virginia Code served to exempt certain records generated by the Virginia Occupation Safety and Health Compliance Program....The Chesterfield School Board caught flack for a policy it adopted in June that discouraged individual members from speaking to the press (or public) without first running it by the board chair or the district's public relations department. [VCOG criticized these](#) and others school district policies as examples of public bodies preferring clean and efficient decisions, despite democracy's often-messy open processes....In an Aug. 5 opinion to the Goochland County Electoral Board secretary, [Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli ruled](#) that two members of a three-member electoral board could not talk to each other on the phone about board business without following FOIA's procedures on public meetings....When asked for records relating to how much Orange County would be paying its part-time attorney, [board chairman Lee Frame said of the](#)

[contract](#), "It's not required to be released, so we're not going to release it." FOIA, however, says that employment contracts must be released....After months of haggling and much public scrutiny, the University of Virginia [finally released to the American Tradition Institute emails](#) from former climate science professor Michael Mann....Prince William County is [suing the Department of Homeland Security](#) over the release of records related to the illegal immigrants the county turns over to DHS. The federal FOIA request was prompted when on an individual earlier turned over to the department, Carlos Martinelly Montano, was released and later killed a nun while driving drunk.

**[If you find VCOG's services and resources useful, consider making a donation or becoming a member. Your dues and/or donations go straight toward VCOG's modest operating budget and are 100% tax deductible](#)**

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