

PRESS RELEASE

**First Amendment Center
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FOIA Advocates Named to National Hall of Fame

ARLINGTON, Va. -- Twenty-one champions of open government will be inducted into the National Freedom of Information Act Hall of Fame during the National FOI Day Conference on March 16.

The new members will constitute the third class of inductees since the Hall of Fame was established in 1996. New classes are named every fifth year. The Hall of Fame is sponsored by a coalition of more than 30 organizations that work for expanded access to government information.

The inductees will be recognized at a luncheon program during the eighth annual National FOI Day Conference next Thursday, March 16. The conference is one of a number of events scheduled during the second annual Sunshine Week beginning on March 12. The federal Freedom of Information Act was signed into law 40 years ago this year.

“The Hall of Fame was established to recognize the work and accomplishments of those who have made a difference in the battle against government secrecy,” said Paul McMasters of the First Amendment Center who coordinated the selection process for this year’s group.

McMasters noted that the new members of the Hall of Fame, three of whom are deceased, have worked on behalf of freedom of information in a variety of venues, including government, the law, the press, academe and public interest groups.

Criteria for induction into the Hall of Fame include “long-term or significant instances of leadership, advocacy, accomplishments or scholarship on behalf of the federal Freedom of Information Act in particular or open government in general.”

Members of this year’s Hall of Fame selection committee besides McMasters: Steven Aftergood, Federation of American Scientists; Scott Armstrong, Information Trust; Rick Blum, OpenTheGovernment.org; Scott Bosley, American Society of Newspaper Editors; Barbara Cochran, Radio-Television News Directors Association; Lucy Dalglish, Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press; Jane Kirtley; Silha Center, University of Minnesota; Robert Leger; Society of Professional Journalists; Patrice McDermott,

American Library Association; and Pete Weitzel, Coalition of Journalists for Open Government.

The theme of the 2006 National FOI Day Conference is "FOIA at Forty." The conference and luncheon will take place at the Freedom Forum World Center in Arlington, Va. The Freedom Forum funds the operations of the First Amendment Center as well as those of the Newseum, an interactive museum of news under construction in Washington, D.C., and the Diversity Institute.

For more information on the National FOIA Hall of Fame and previous inductees, go the First Amendment Center's Web site or:

http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/about.aspx?item=FOIA_Hall_of_Fame

The 2006 class of inductees for the National FOIA Hall of Fame:

ANDY ALEXANDER, Washington bureau chief, Cox Newspapers

GARY BASS, founder and director of OMB Watch

THOMAS S. BLANTON, director of National Security Archive at George Washington University

DANIELLE BRIAN, executive director, Project on Government Oversight

DAVID BURNHAM, co-founder and co-director, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

HODDING CARTER III, University of North Carolina

TOM CURLEY, president and CEO, The Associated Press

TOM DEVINE, legal director, Government Accountability Project

KEVIN M. GOLDBERG, counsel, American Society of Newspaper Editor

MORTON H. HALPERIN, director of U.S. advocacy, Open Society Institute

CHARLES W. HINKLE (deceased), FOIA officer in office of Secretary of Defense

KATHLEEN A. KIRBY, counsel, Radio-Television News Directors Association

SUSAN LONG, co-founder and co-director, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse

ROBERT D. LYSTAD, counsel, Society of Professional Journalists

JOHN E. PIKE, director, GlobalSecurity.org

RONALD L. PLESSER (deceased), lawyer and expert on federal information law and policy

RUSSELL M. ROBERTS (deceased), FOIA officer at former Department of Health, Education and Welfare

A. BRYAN SIEBERT, former senior executive, Department of Energy

DAVID SOBEL, general counsel, Electronic Privacy Information Center

THOMAS M. SUSMAN, lawyer and expert on federal information law and policy

MARK TAPSCOTT, director of media and public policy center, Heritage Foundation