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The Sunshine Report: Online Transparency news from the Virginia Coalition for Open Government **October 2010**

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Coalition News

Recently on the VCOG Blog...

- [Citizen vs. media access: is there a difference?](#)

New board member

VCOG is pleased to announce that **Michael Stowe**, managing editor of the *Roanoke Times* will join our board of directors. Stowe will fill one of the five seats reserved for appointment by the Virginia Press Association, pending approval by VPA's board Oct. 15.

Our Annual Conference sponsors: THANK YOU

- Allen, Allen, Allen & Allen,
- Alpha-Omega Wealth Mgt.
- The Associated Press
- Bacon'sRebellion.com
- Christian & Barton
- The Daily Progress

Greetings, Friend of VCOG!

REGISTER TODAY! **VCOG annual conference Oct. 21-22**

Just three more weeks to register for VCOG's access and transparency conference in Richmond!

Panel discussions will be held Friday, Oct. 22, at Virginia's historic Capitol and will include topics such as:

- Lobbying the legislature;
- FOIA bootcamp;
- Access on college campuses;
- Access to law enforcement records;
- Government technology; and
- Using FOIA to create Pulitzer Prize-winning journalism.

The panels will be preceded by a board dinner Thursday, Oct. 21, at the Commonwealth Park Suites Hotel, where VCOG's annual FOI award winners will also be recognized.

[Click here to register](#), and also take a moment to [learn more](#) about the panels, panelists and our ever-growing list of awesome sponsors.

FOI Award Winners Announced

An Axton woman wanting info on a



- The Daily Progress
- Media General
- The News Virginian
- PWHDCapitol Consulting
- Richmond Free Press
- Richmond Times-Dispatch
- The Society of Professional Journalists - Virginia Chapter
- The Virginia Association of Trial Lawyers
- Virginia Lawyers Weekly
- The Virginian-Pilot
- Virginia Press Women
- The Virginian Review
- Joseph Walton
- Washington & Lee School of Journalism & Mass Communication
- WTVR-TV
- WWBT-TV

VCOG's members

We are lucky to have such dedicated and diligent members. A big thank you to those members who have already renewed their memberships for the year. Renewal notices continue to issue each month, and if you've received one already, please take the time to fill it out and send it back. In the meantime, check out this [impressive list of individuals and organizations](#). VCOG is proud to have as members for 2010-2011.

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!

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proposed "mega site" in Pittsylvania County, a



reporter uncovering massive failures in Norfolk's administration of state SOL tests, and a school board intent on being more open and accountable to its constituents.

All are being recognized by the Virginia Coalition for Open Government's annual FOI awards for contributions to open government in Virginia.

The awards will be presented Thursday, Oct. 21, at VCOG's board dinner preceding its annual conference on Oct. 22.

[To learn more about this year's winners, click here.](#)

[To register for the dinner and/or the conference, click here.](#)

Open government news

Despite the massive failure of VITA's central computers in early September, Virginia has been drawing praise for its IT-savvy from the Center for Digital Government. Chesterfield County's website received the CDG's [Best of the Web](#) award for a county its size, while Virginia received an A- in the center's [2010 Digital States Survey](#). Only two states received an A, and only one other state received an A-....The school boards in both Albemarle County and Charlottesville decided to conduct part of the vetting process for filling a vacated seat on their respective boards in private. [Advocates objected to the closed process](#), noting that since the candidates would be filling seats usually reserved for elected officials, their qualifications and backgrounds [should be subject to public scrutiny](#)....A judge [ruled Sept. 7](#) that the Augusta County Board of Equalization violated FOIA's meeting provisions in 2008 when it posted a note on the door to the main meeting room instructing citizens to "please wait here until your case is called." The judge also [instructed the county](#) to lower Thomas Cline's assessment and refund him the difference....[In reviewing the credit card receipts of various area officials](#), the *Virginian-Pilot* discovered that a tourism official racked up over \$14,000 in unauthorized charges, leading Virginia Beach police to charge Reggie Stevenson with felony embezzlement and prompting the city council to direct the city auditor to [review the city's credit card program](#).

Nearly 100 attend VCOG's records management & FOIA seminar

Nearly 100 government employees, representing more than 45 state and local government agencies, attended a half-day seminar on using better records management techniques to make processing FOIA requests easier.

The 2.5-hour seminar was organized by the Virginia Coalition for Open Government, with help from VCOG members the Virginia Association of Counties, the Virginia Municipal League and the Library of Virginia, where the event was held.

Attendees heard about an online FOIA-tracking system designed by the Virginia Department of Transportation from VDOT's policy division's Frankie Giles. Alexandria's e-government manager, Craig Fifer, talked about both philosophical and practical solutions to working with FOIA. Anita Vannucci, a records management analyst with the Library, offered tips on effective records storage, retrieval and destruction, while the FOIA Council's Maria Everett went over basic FOIA procedures.

It was the first such seminar offered by VCOG, and with such a great response, it will surely not be the last.

[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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