

More requests going unanswered

WHAT IS SUNSHINE WEEK?

A week of March 13 has been named Sunshine Week by the organizations and other groups pressing for government openness, contending information is being withheld more often by state and city officials than in the past.

By MARTHA MENDEZ

The Associated Press

Since 1998, many federal departments have been reducing the amount of information they release to the public — even as the government fields and answers more requests for information than ever, an Associated Press review has found.



Even Dick Cheney's 2001 energy policy task force are all among the records that the government isn't sharing with the public.

MORE INSIDE

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- But open government advocates worry that U.S. citizens 10

Who wants records? Candidate, union and others

Editors' note: Across the country, news outlets and other media outlets and groups are participating in Sunshine Week, a celebration and recommitment of freedom of information. The special week begins today. This is part two in a two-part series.

"I won't give up fighting till the end. ... I educate, educate and try to get things done."

"This is an easy issue that the average person asked government for information the day it was born. Most of the time, over and over each day, government ignores — and even punishes — people who ask for information. There's a lot of people who are asking for information from our local governments and why."

ONLINE PRESENTATION



Web site outlines information access, AT

Sunshine: Without laws, government keeps lots of secrets

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Under the heading of free-funded campaign work. Conflicting versions of events for Superintendent Deryl Erick, Herrick eventually found in a letter to the editor that he had written into his contract at least one new benefit for which he consistently thought he had school board approval. More information obtained through the open records law below.

U.S. Fred Goetz's complaint against the village of Grafton, filed with the state Equal Rights Division and the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), alleging age discrimination was the reason he was not chosen as police chief. Open records laws can be without making formal, written requests. The Michigan Po Department, for example, released the full report of internal investigation into death of Matthew Sheridan.

Bliss who have a 4,000 nearby city could help them. For County and Powers found Brown & Cassel law firm is a lawyer and is for nine hours. Inspector Mark Schmitt turned up information that revealed the truth about the city's push to change the way residents get utility services. Mayor Buddy Dyer, now suspended, said then that his administration had done very little study of the idea to carve off the Orlando Utilities Com.

State's DNA State Bureau people over 8-Norman.

Laws ensure that 'democracy thrives in the light of day'

A week of coordinated news stories, columns and editorials about open government law

Getting information Try these Web sites for information

B2 Orlando Sentinel

Open records pave path to changes

SUNSHINE

Reporters Mary Shackles and Denise Marie Bohms used a variety of public-records databases to develop a two-part series on open records.

was titled "Deadly But Legal" was pulled from public records by staffers Roger Roy, Anthony Colaneri and Pedro Bar Celme. To examine 82 cases in which Central Florida officials

ABOUT SUNSHINE WEEK

Throughout the week, local

were at the heart of a 10-month investigation last year. Florida Department of Justice by reporters Mary Shackles and Denise Marie Bohms. That work is the



The Sun Shines in Cyberspace

News media Web sites have come a long way from simply being electronic versions of the day's print or broadcast offering. During Sunshine Week, many participants used the Web to offer supplemental materials designed to enable people to exercise their right to government information.

Rather than just tell people how to access records, these sites offered links directly to relevant government Web sites; they featured online FOIA letter generators and appeal forms; and they pulled together in one place all of their Sunshine Week coverage, giving a sense of the larger picture.

State press associations and Freedom of Information coalitions were among those who were particularly resourceful in using their Web sites to encourage participation in Sunshine Week and in offering an online resource to get the tools to do so.

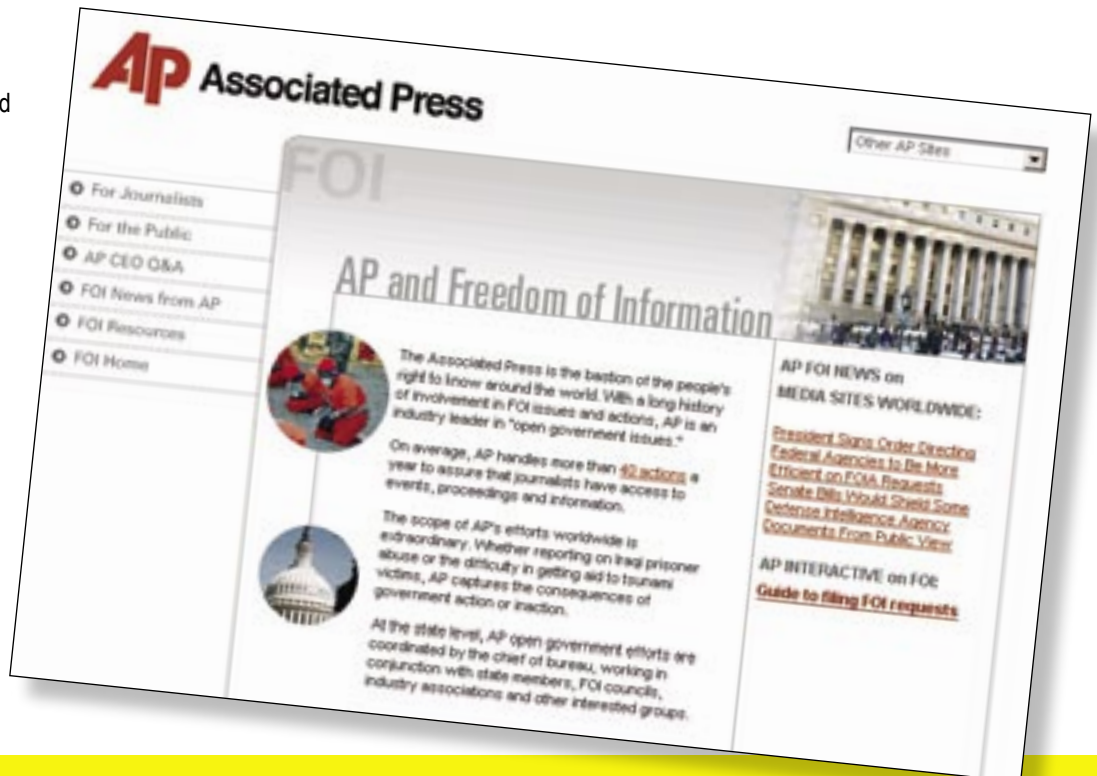
With the advent of new technologies and innovative ways to use the ones we already have, there is fantastic potential for reaching an even wider audience during Sunshine Week 2006. And beyond.



The Times Union in Albany put its Sunshine Week package in the Special Reports section of its Web site. Built around the strong photo illustration that ran on page one of the newspaper's kickoff coverage, the site features links to news articles and opinion pieces that ran that week, charts, and information about state laws from the New York State Committee on Open Government. The Times Union page is online at www.timesunion.com/specialreports/sunshineweek/.

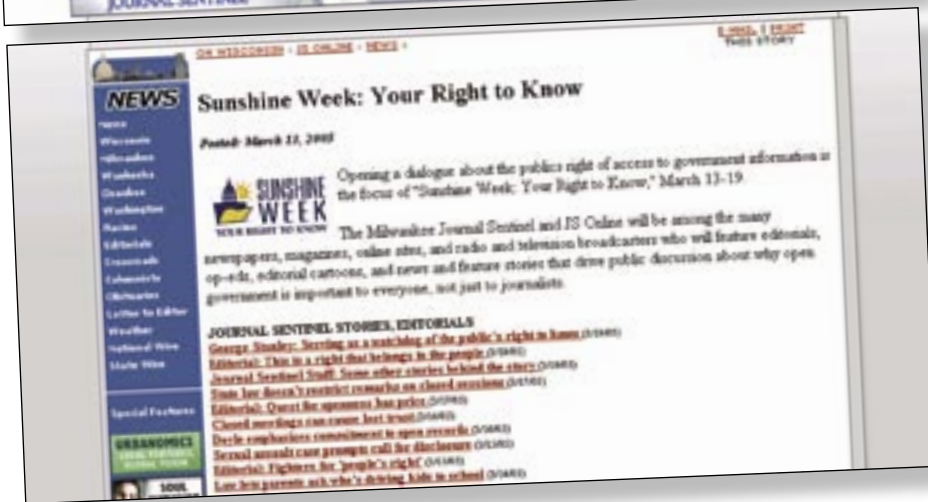


The Associated Press launched a Freedom of Information section on its corporate site in conjunction with Sunshine Week. In addition to posting AP articles produced specifically for Sunshine Week, the site is now continually updated with FOI news, features resources for journalists and the public. It also links to an interactive guide to filing FOI requests. The AP FOI section is found online at www.ap.org/foi/.





In Baltimore, The Sun created a Web page to showcase its Sunshine Week coverage. It included an editorial cartoon, info graphics and links to resources such as how to file a FOIA request and FOIA contacts of federal agencies. The Sun's Sunshine Week Web page is www.baltimoresun.com/news/nationworld/bal-sunshine.1,7704792.storygallery?coll=bal-specialreports-headlines&ctrack=1&cset=true.



The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel produced extensive news and opinion pieces throughout Sunshine Week, and it posted them on its Web site, along with Associated Press reports and an extensive list of links to national and state resources online. To see the Journal Sentinel's reports, go online to www.jsonline.com/news/gen/mar05/309032.asp.



While its Sunshine Week coverage tops the page, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution also incorporates earlier special reports about open government and other continuing coverage of the issue on a special Web page that's online at www.ajc.com/opinion/content/opinion/foia.html.





The Florida Society of Newspaper Editors launched the first Sunshine Sunday in 2002 and has consistently supported open government efforts. Its Web site offers a comprehensive collection of articles, editorials, columns and cartoons produced by its members across the state. To view the FSNE Sunshine Sunday page, go online to <http://www.fsne.org/sunshine2005/>.



Fourth Annual SUNSHINE SUNDAY

Protecting your right to know

March 13, 2005

Because of the positive response from its public awareness campaign last year, the Florida Society of Newspaper Editors (FSNE) is conducting a fourth annual Sunshine Sunday event.

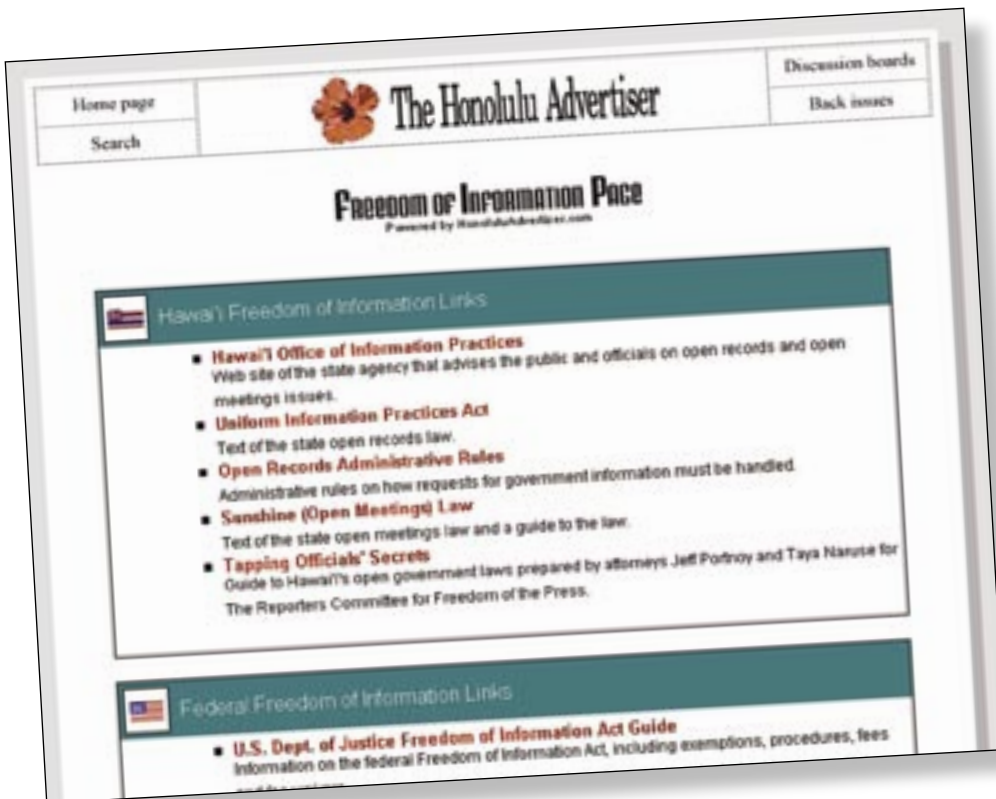
Nationally, Sunshine Sunday has grown into [Sunshine Week](#). The American Society of Newspaper Editors heard from Florida editors about the success of the event and is asking newspapers nationwide to raise awareness from March 13-19 about open government and records access.

[Read AP story.](#)

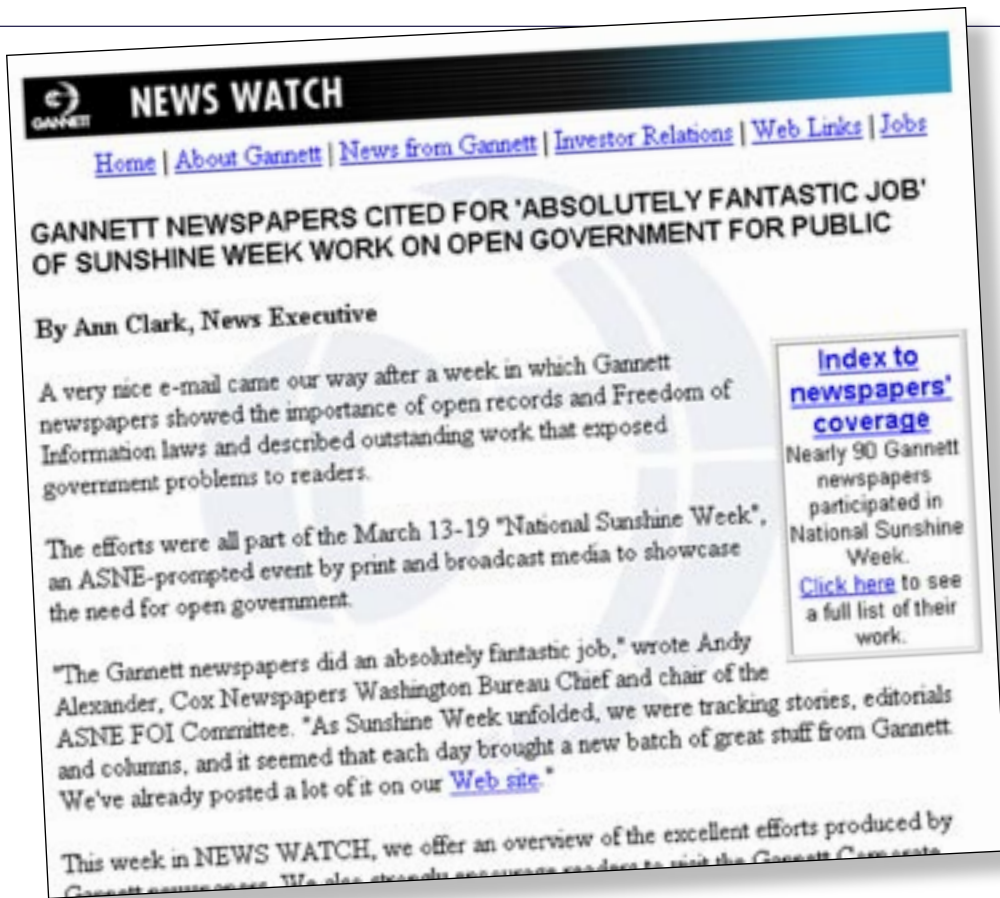
Please submit contributions, questions or comments to: sunshine2005@fsne.org.

Editorials

- [Boca Raton News](#)
- [Bradenton Herald](#)
- [The Cape Coral Daily Breeze](#)
- [The Citrus County Chronicle](#)
- [Daytona Beach News-Journal](#)



In Hawaii, The Honolulu Advertiser put together a strong package of Sunshine Week articles and resources which include a Freedom of Information Web page with links to state and national FOI resources that explain laws and how to access information, as well as links to other resources for FOI information and education. The page is online at <http://the.honoluluadvertiser.com/publicsunshine/>.



Gannett Co.'s corporate Web site encouraged Sunshine Week participation by its newspapers, and when the week was over, lauded their efforts in the News Watch newsletter. In addition, the Gannett newspapers' efforts were compiled on the Web site with links to summaries of what they produced or did to mark Sunshine Week. The News Watch article, which links to the list of Gannett participants, is www.gannett.com/go/newswatch/2005/march/nw0325-1.htm.



By "revisiting the theme that all people can be reporters," the alternative Boise Weekly participated in Sunshine Week with "Journalism 101: A layperson's guide to digging up dirt." The paper also sent several staffers to a seminar about open records hosted by The Idaho Statesman. To read "Journalism 101," visit www.boiseweekly.com/gyrobase/content?oid=oid%3A467.

