

### Sunshine Week 2007

During the week of March 12–16, ALA and several other organizations celebrated Sunshine Week 2007, a weeklong recognition of the importance of open government and freedom of information.

To kick off Sunshine Week, on March 12, ALA cohosted “Closed Doors; Open Democracies?” a nationally Webcasted dialogue that featured a panel of experts who addressed, among many topics, the impact of government suppression and manipulation of scientific information on public health and safety. Panelists included Dorothy Biggs, (former Environmental Protection Agency [EPA] librarian), Rick Piltz (director of Climate Science Watch), Susan Wood (research professor in the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health), and Jay Dyckman (director of the Knowledge Project at the National Coalition Against Censorship).

The event was an enormous success, and it culminated in three main calls to action:

- Visit the [OpenTheGovernment.org](http://OpenTheGovernment.org) coalition Web site ([openthegovernment.org/article/articleview/247/1/94/](http://openthegovernment.org/article/articleview/247/1/94/)) and get involved.
- Get others involved: talk to at least five people about the “Closed Doors; Open Democracies?” event and the themes of Sunshine Week. And get each of the five people to join the [OpenTheGovernment.org](http://OpenTheGovernment.org) coalition.
- Begin the dialogue about a 21st-century right to know agenda: send [OpenTheGovernment](http://OpenTheGovernment.org) the top one or two things you would change to improve public access today. Send your one or two ideas to [yourRTK@openthegovernment.org](mailto:yourRTK@openthegovernment.org)

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Sunshine Week 2007 came to a close with the National Freedom of Information (FOI) Day Conference on March 16. The event—“Access: Oversight and Priorities”—was sponsored by the First Amendment Center in cooperation with ALA. The conference brought together access advocates, government officials, lawyers, librarians, journalists, educators, and others to discuss the latest issues and developments in sunshine in the government.

During this annual event, which falls on or near the birthday of James Madison, ALA President Leslie Burger presented the James Madison Award and the Eileen Cooke State and Local Madison Award to recognize those who have championed, protected, and promoted public access to government information and the public's right to know.

The recipient of this year's James Madison award was Paul McMasters, who recently retired and has been involved in every significant FOI legislation for the last two decades. The recipient of the Eileen Cooke State and Local Madison Award was Patricia Glass Schuman, former ALA president, who has trained tens of thousands of librarians and trustees for free access to government information.

In her remarks, Burger honored the passing of Ridley Kessler, who provided public access to government information as the federal documents and regional depository librarian at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.

Burger also took the time to acknowledge the courage of a special group: the EPA library staff.

“The courage of these individuals has enabled the ALA to report the scope of this disturbing situation to Congressional Committees,” Burger said in her remarks, “which have now taken action to halt and formally investigate the EPA's actions.” *AB*