

NEWS RELEASE  
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TOPIC: OPEN GOVERNMENT HONOREES NAMED

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Toby Nixon, president of the Washington Coalition for Open Government, announced today that two organizations, three public officials and three individual citizens will be recognized for their work on behalf of the cause of transparent and accountable government with the coalition's prestigious Key Awards.

"An informed public is vital to our democratic system, and those we have chosen to honor have each given time, effort, and resources to ensure the people's right to know what their government is doing", stated Nixon.

The honorees include: Concerned Citizens in Action of Washougal; David Koenig of Federal Way; Olympia Port Commissioner Paul Telford; Greg Hansen, Grant County Public Utilities District Commissioner; State Representative Bruce Chandler, R-Granger; Charlie Burrow of Kitsap Citizens for Responsible Planning; James Neff, investigative reporter for the Seattle Times; and Allied Law Group of Seattle.

Nominations for the honors cited the following accomplishments as reasons for the awards: "Rep. Bruce Chandler (R-Granger) is the Ranking Minority Member of the House State Government and Tribal Affairs Committee. He showed strong support for government transparency when he stood up for keeping HB 3292, the bill to require taping of executive sessions, alive when it looked as if this piece of legislation was doomed forever."

"Concerned Citizens In Action, under the leadership of Dr. Martha Martin and Roger Daniels, has fought for the cause of open government for several years. Their efforts on behalf of the public's right to know through the use of public records requests in the Port of Camas/ Washougal RiverWalk project uncovered questionable activity on the part of the Port. The group continues to act as watchdogs for transparency in the affairs of local government."

"Since the mid-1990's, David Koenig has pursued the cause of government transparency by bringing cases based on denials of public records requests. He has won awards against the cities of Lakewood, Buckley, Tukwila and Des Moines. His pursuit of openness is based on his desire to see that local jurisdictions clean up their acts."

"Paul Telford ran for Port Commissioner on a platform calling for openness and accountability. He had previously won two landmark decisions holding officials accountable to the public. During his tenure, he has attempted to expand public access to the Port's affairs by urging the commission to televise its meetings."

"Greg Hansen had the courage to call his fellow commissioners to account for violating the Open Meetings Act."

"Michele Earl-Hubbard and Greg Overstreet, the principals of Allied Law Group, have defended the public's right to know what its government is doing both as individuals and as a law firm. They each have an impressive record of taking cases of people whose access to government information has been denied, often working tirelessly for little or no remuneration. In addition, Allied Law Group

has contributed thousands of dollars worth of pro bono work to WCOG, which has enabled the coalition to fulfill its mission of upholding the principles of open government."

"James Neff has pursued a career-long fight for public access to government information. As a reporter, editor, professor, author and newspaper industry leader, Neff has always been in forefront of the battle to keep government open, not because it was his job but because he has a passion for it and believes in the principles. As investigations editor at The Times, Neff has led an unprecedented period in which The Seattle Times worked to open government records, resulting in dozens of groundbreaking stories. Entire teams of Times journalists have produced these stories, but Neff has provided the hands-on leadership throughout."

"Charlie Burrow's leadership of Kitsap Citizens for Responsible Planning resulted in improved awareness of and access to open government in Kitsap County. His action helped clarify and focus the minds of many Kitsap County citizens, officials and staff of the functions and value of open government concepts. Charlie's actions exposed the undisclosed meetings and arrangements of a very large corporation with local officials."

Each Key Award winner will receive a framed certificate and a lapel pin at the coalition's annual James Madison/James Andersen Awards breakfast on Friday, September 19 from 7:00 to 9:00 AM at the Washington Athletic Club in Seattle. The event will honor Jolene Unsoeld, former member of the state House of Representatives and U.S. Congress with its 2008 James Madison Award, and retired publisher Kris Passey with its second annual James Andersen Award. Enrique Cerna, program director of KCTS-9 will act as master of ceremonies, and David Horsey, political cartoonist for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer will present the keynote address.

The Washington Coalition for Open Government is a non-partisan, non-profit organization founded in 2003 by a group of individuals and organizations dedicated to strengthening and preserving Washington's open meetings and public records laws and regulations. For more information about WCOG and its activities, go to [www.washingtoncog.org](http://www.washingtoncog.org)

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