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WASHINGTON COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT PRESENTS KEY AWARDS TO CITIZEN ACTIVISTS, LAWMAKERS

Washington Coalition for Open Government

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The Washington Coalition for Open Government will present Key Awards to two elected officials and four private citizens in recognition of their work to make government entities in Washington to be open and accountable to the public.

The citizen activists honored are Todd Hogden, of Bothell, Mark Mahnkey of Everett, Glenn Milner of Lake Forest Park and Armen Yousoufian of Vashon Island. The elected officials are Attorney General Rob McKenna and Rep. Lynn Kessler, D-Hoquiam, Majority Leader of the Washington House of Representatives.

Details:

Todd Hogden and Mark Mahnkey

Mahnkey, director of public policy for the Washington Civil Rights Council/Washington Shared Parenting, and Hogden, a fellow member of the group, waged a successful campaign to force the Snohomish County court system to properly record electronic transcripts of all court proceedings and archive them for the required six years. Their research determined that Snohomish County was the only county in the state that lacked a policy of recording all Superior Court proceedings.

Glen Milner

Milner, of Lake Forest Park, has used the federal Freedom of Information Act over the past 20 years to monitor activities of the U.S. Navy in the Puget Sound Region. Among his findings: that rail cars carrying submarine missile rocket motors involved in a 1986 derailment near Shelton contained large amounts of high explosives, despite denials from Navy officials; and that nuclear warheads were being transported by truck to the Bangor submarine base in violation of established rules. In his latest FOIA lawsuit, he is attempting to force the Navy to document the environmental impact of its weapons depot on Indian Island near Port Townsend.

The awards to Hogden, Mahnkey and Milner will be presented at WCOG's next monthly meeting Aug. 10 in Seattle.

Armen Yousoufian

Yousoufian, a former Seattle hotel owner, has waged a decade-long public records battle with King County over its reluctance to turn over financial records and other documents related to the 1997 deal that resulted in the demolition of the Kingdome and the construction of Seahawks Stadium (now Qwest Field). When the county dragged its feet, Yousoufian sued under the Public Records Act. After an initial court victory against the county in 2001, later appeals in the case reached the state Supreme Court, and the legal wrangling continues to this day on the amount of penalties and legal fees the county will ultimately be ordered to pay.

Lynn Kessler

The Hoquiam Democrat is in her eighth term representing the 24th Legislative District and currently serves as House Majority Leader. Kessler has been a staunch supporter of open government legislation throughout her tenure in Olympia. During the 2007 Legislature, Kessler was the House sponsor of a bill to create a "Sunshine Committee" to review exemptions to Washington's Public Records Act and was instrumental in its passage. She was also the prime sponsor of successful legislation to require stricter

legal publishing requirements for government agencies seeking to seize private property in eminent domain actions.

Rob McKenna

McKenna, a Bellevue Republican who was elected Attorney General in 2004 running on an open government platform, backed up that campaign rhetoric with action by implementing a host of open government reforms, including assigning a deputy attorney general to help citizens pursue public records requests, creating model public records disclosure rules for all state and local agencies, and requesting legislation to create the "Sunshine Committee" to review exemptions to the Public Records Act.

The awards to Kessler, McKenna and Yousoufian will be presented Sept. 21 in Seattle.

The Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG) is an independent non-partisan non-profit organization founded in 2002 by a group of individuals representing organizations with a broad spectrum of opinions and backgrounds, all dedicated to the principles of strengthening the state's open government laws and protecting the public's access to government at all levels.

For more information, contact Washington Coalition for Open Government, 6351 Seaview Avenue NW, Seattle, WA 98107-2664 or on the web at www.washingtoncog.org or call (206) 782-0393.