

Washington Coalition for Open Government washingtoncog.org

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February 12, 2007

Annual President's Report

Dear Washington Coalition Board and Members,

As I look back over the last year, I am amazed and proud of the accomplishments of this organization. Who would have known that the small working group which met to explore developing a state-wide Coalition in 2001 would grow into the diverse, bi-partisan and increasingly powerful and useful organization we have become. As a lawyer in 2001, I was saddened at the number of requests I was getting from people and organizations with legitimate open government concerns that I had to turn away. Some days – like after that first audit for public records was published statewide – the phone literally rang off the hook with people in need of help. I and other lawyers helped those we could on a pro bono basis, but there was no where to refer all those we could not aid. That is no longer the case, and for that you all should be proud.

The Washington Coalition for Open Government has grown into a credible source of information and support for citizens and government alike. We provide regular town meetings across the state, file friend of the court briefs in the appellate courts, provide testimony before the state legislature, host a listserv for Coalition members to exchange information and provide a citizens' help line via email and to answer open government questions for anyone who asks. Our membership and our board grow each year. Our messages reach hundreds of Washingtonians, and our work benefits thousands more. Summarized below are just a few of memorable events from this past year:

Outreach and Membership Committee:

WCOG met with visitors from the Democratic Republic of Congo in May 2006 and 14 Latin American journalists and dignitaries in July through the World Affairs Council.

It held a Continuing Legal Education seminar/Public Forum for attorneys and members of the public in Spokane on July 14, 2006 at the Spokane Falls Community College titled "Digitizing Government Transparency."

WCOG has produced several print Public Service Announcements regarding the Coalition, which have been submitted to newspapers throughout the state. WCOG also produced and distributed a videotape Public Service Announcement to television stations throughout the state.

Our directors and officers are frequently contacted and quoted by journalists in stories dealing with open government issues, and members of the public are finding their way to the Coalition and seeking its advice for their own open government battles.

Because of the growth of citizen requests to the board and various board members, last year WCOG created a citizen helpline to allow for email exchanges between members of the public and a task force of board members to respond to their requests. WCOG also created a members list serv to allow WCOG members to email each other seeking guidance