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WASHINGTON COALITION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT PRESENTS KEY AWARD TO STATE SENATOR PAM ROACH

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STATE SENATOR PAM ROACH RECOGNIZED WITH KEY AWARD FOR GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY EFFORTS

The Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG) presented a Key Award today to State Senator Pam Roach for her consistent stands in favor of transparency and access to government.

Sen. Roach (R-Auburn), who has represented the 31st legislative district since 1990, sponsored in the 2011 session several pieces of legislation that would increase access to public records, including a measure that would require public agencies to post certain information on their websites. She has also served as a member of the Sunshine Committee since its inception. The board of lawmakers, journalists and attorneys is reviewing the various exceptions to Washington's Public Records Act and Open Public Meetings Act to consider whether the exemptions are needed. The number of exceptions has grown from fewer than a dozen when the laws took effect in 1972 to more than 300 today.

The award was presented by WCOG board member Mike Reitz of The Freedom Foundation, at 11 a.m. on Thursday, Dec. 1 on the floor of the Washington State Senate.

"Senator Roach has been a consistent strong defender of open government and the public's right to know what their government is doing," Toby Nixon, president of WCOG, said. "She introduced bills every legislative session to expand access to public records and meetings. We greatly appreciate her faithful and consistent service as a member of the Sunshine Committee, and especially her commitment to making more legislative records open to the public."

WCOG presents its Key Award to individuals and organizations, including public officials and agencies, who have done something notable for the cause of open government.

WCOG board member Patience Rogge, who nominated Roach for the recognition, noted her "dedication to the cause of open government," and cited the senator's record sponsoring legislation intended to maintain and extend public access to records and meetings of state and local agencies.

Sen. Roach, who quotes the preamble to the state Public Records Act on her legislative website, said that "Without transparency there can be no accountability in government," and so access is essential. "A free people have the right to know what their government is doing. We should demand it. How else can we hold elected officials and bureaucrats accountable?"

She supports the continued work of the Sunshine Committee, whose existence has been threatened by state budget cuts. "Privacy is legitimate in some areas of trade and criminal justice. The purpose of the Sunshine Committee is to find areas of law that unnecessarily shroud information that should be public," she added. Of her nomination, she said, "it's nice to be appreciated."

The Washington Coalition for Open Government is an independent nonpartisan nonprofit 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.