PRESS RELEASE

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD RECIPIENTS ANNOUNCED

Senator Mark Dayton and Marvin Anderson, the retired Director of the Minnesota State Law Library, are the recipients of the 2002 John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award. The award will be presented at the largest gathering of librarians in the state, the Minnesota Library Association’s Annual Conference at 10:30 AM on Friday, September 26, 2003 at the Mayo Civic Center in Rochester.

Senator Dayton receives the award for his action on behalf of the Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP). The FDLP has 25 member libraries in the state of Minnesota and 1300 nationwide; FDLP libraries are also known as depository libraries. The flow of government information to those libraries was in jeopardy when the OMB proposed in May 2002 to cut the Government Printing Office’s budget by $50-70 million. In his role as Chair of the Joint Committee on Printing, Senator Dayton rose in opposition to the Administration’s attempt to reduce the Government Printing Office (GPO)’s budget, and by extension, compromising the GPO’s ability to deliver federal information to 1300 depository libraries nationwide. The Senator called and lead a congressional hearing that resulted in an acknowledgement by all parties that the loss of valuable information into the FDLP program would be much greater than any potential savings in the GPO budget.

In large measure, the Senator’s action preserved access to the free flow if information from the federal government to depository libraries, and ultimately to millions of library users in public, academic and law libraries throughout the country.

Stated below are the reasons why Senator Dayton receives the 2002 Freedom of Information Award. Depository librarians, who serve a pivotal role in making government information accessible, are especially appreciative of the Senator’s efforts in response to the threat posed by the Office of Management and Budget Memo M-02-07 dated May 2002 to the free flow of government information to depository libraries across the country :

* **the Senator's quick response to the appeal from the library community in May 2002**. At that time, the OMB thought that it could save $50-70 million in the GPO's budget without any appreciation of the negative impact upon the free flow of information from GPO to depository libraries nationwide.
* **the Senator's willingness to learn about the situation from those in the field**, specifically a group of Minnesota’s depository librarians in a July 2002 meeting at the University of Minnesota. A wide variety of libraries were represented: university and college, public and private, urban and rural.
* **the Senator's initiative in scheduling a hearing on the matter in a timely manner in July 2002**. Expert witnesses included Mr. Mitch Daniels, Director of OMB; Mr. Benjamin Cooper, Printing Industries of America; and Ms. Julie Wallace, the Regional Depository Librarian at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities. For full-text, see <http://jcp.senate.gov/business.html>. After conferring with Ms. Wallace, the Senator too became an advocate for the free flow of government information to the American people. The Senator's response brought positive attention to the depository library community as a whole and to Ms. Wallace in particular.
* **the hearing allowed professionals from the library community and the printing industry to voice their concerns about the Administration's efforts.**

The Freedom of Information Award is sponsored by the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information, an interest group of individuals and organizations
committed to open access to public information in print, electronic and digital
format. The award is named in honor of John R. Finnegan, retired senior
vice-president of the St. Paul Pioneer Press, co-founder and chair of the
Minnesota Joint Media Committee; it recognizes his dedication to openness in
government and his work on behalf of the people's right to know.

The Freedom of Information Award honors the birth of James Madison, fourth president of the United States and the principal author of the Bill of Rights. It also celebrates the
 the 37th anniversary of the passage of the federal Freedom of Information Act.

The Minnesota Coalition on Government Information, modeled on a national coalition initiated in 1986 by the American Library Association, presents the award each year to those individuals and organizations whose efforts have made a difference in the abitlity of citizens to receive and access government information.  Coalition members are Metronet, MLA/GODORT, the newly formed MN Association of Federal Depository Libraries and others. Laurel Stiebler of the MN State Law Library serves as head of the Coalition.

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