



MINNESOTA COALITION
ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

PRESS RELEASE

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**Brandon Smith speaks on lawsuit that pried open police video
At 2016 Freedom of Information Day & Finnegan FOI Award Ceremony**



Minneapolis, MN: February 16 — At noon Wednesday, March 16, 2016, the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI) will present its annual Freedom of Information Day Award at the Minneapolis Central Library. The event coincides with Sunshine Week, a national initiative aimed at highlighting government transparency.

The keynote speaker for the event is independent journalist Brandon Smith, whose lawsuit against the Chicago Police Department forced the City of Chicago to release a police dash cam video. The video shows a police officer shooting 17-year-old Laquan McDonald 16 times as he walked away from the officer on a Chicago street in October 2014. On November 24, 2015, after battling the release of the video for months, and just hours before its release to the public, State's Attorney Anita Alvarez charged police Officer Jason Van Dyke with first degree murder.

Following Brandon Smith's remarks, MNCOGI will bestow its annual John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award to the 2016 recipient. The John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award was established by MNCOGI in 1989 and is named for the retired senior vice-president and assistant publisher of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. Finnegan was a lifelong stalwart of open meetings, open records and the First Amendment. He was instrumental in creating the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act – the state's open records framework. Each year, the award honors a Minnesotan or Minnesota institution whose work demonstrates leadership and commitment to the power of information to effect change.

When: Wednesday, March 16, 2016, 12:00pm-1:00pm

Where: Minneapolis Central Library, Pohlad Hall, 300 Nicollet Mall, Mpls, MN 55401

Freedom of Information Day is commemorated each year on March 16th, the birthdate of James Madison, a champion of access and transparency in government.

About the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MNCOGI)

MNCOGI is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to the public's right to know, the promotion of public access to government information and transparency of government operations. MNCOGI Board members are Jim Barnum, John Borger; Helen Burke, Treasurer; Bill Bushey, Hal Davis, Pat Doyle, Duchesne Drew; Matt Ehling, Secretary; Don Gemberling, Gary Hill, Chair; Ibrahim Hirsi, Jane Kirtley; Heidi Kitrosser, Amy Riegelman, Sharon Schmickle, James Shiffer and Tom Steward.

For more information about MNCOGI, please visit our website at www.mncogi.org.

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