



MINNESOTA COALITION ON GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

February 25, 2017

Contact: Gary Hill – ghillgary@gmail.com

Tony Webster to receive MNCOGI's 2017 John R. Finnegan FOI Award; FOI Day ceremony features Patrice McDermott of OpenTheGovernment.org

The award will be presented at MNCOGI's annual Freedom of Information Day event Thursday, March 16 from noon to 1 pm, at Minneapolis Central Library's Pohlad Hall, 300 Nicollet Mall.

Tony Webster to receive John R. Finnegan Freedom Of Information Award

Tony Webster, a self-proclaimed “web engineer, public records researcher, and policy nerd” wins this year’s Finnegan FOI Award. As a private citizen, Webster exercises the Data Practices Act with a rigor that rivals, and often supersedes, that of professional journalists and researchers. Webster’s requests concern data across a range of topics, including government surveillance, housing fraud, restaurant inspection data, and government responses to protests. Webster publishes much of the government data he receives on his website, optimized to be discovered by search engines. This has led to the data being used in the reporting of professional journalists. Using his website, tonywebster.com, and tweets, @webster, Webster regularly works to increase public access to government data via tools, reporting, and his own experience. “Tony Webster is a shining example of the power of a single individual to make government more transparent and hold it accountable,” said MNCOGI chair Gary Hill.

Patrice McDermott's keynote “Secrecy and Accountability – Looking Forward, Looking Back”

As Executive Director of OpenTheGovernment.org, Dr. McDermott aggressively promotes their mission “to advance the public’s right to know and to reduce unnecessary secrecy in government.” Her remarks will reflect sixteen years of working in Washington, D.C. through several administrations in the face of unpredictable and often difficult challenges. She is the author of *Who Needs to Know? The State of Public Access to Federal Government Information*. In 2011 she received the James Madison Award from the American Library Association in recognition of her work to champion, protect, and promote public access to government information and she was inducted into the National Freedom of Information Act Hall of Fame in 2001.

Note: We are moving our newsletter to a new platform. To ensure that you continue to receive updates from MNCOGI, please [click here to subscribe to our new newsletter](#).

All MNCOGI events are free & open to the public as we celebrate [Sunshine Week, March 12-18, 2017](#)

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, Secretary; Pat Doyle, Matt Ehling, Don Gemberling, Nancy Herther, Gary Hill, Chair; Jane Kirtley; Heidi Kitrosser, Sharon Schmickle and James Shiffer.

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