

**Letter in Support of the Nomination of Don Gemberling for the
National Freedom of Information Coalition's
State Open Government Hall of Fame Award**

Submitted by Hal Davis
MNCOGI board member
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Don Gemberling began working, professionally, with issues of transparency, governmental accountability, the implications of technology on humans, and data privacy in 1973. He was present at the creation of Minnesota's Data Practices Act. He spent three decades in state government helping public agencies comply with the DPA and related law. He is currently on the Board of the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information.

Don's history of involvement with public records advocacy has always been broad-based. Journalists and librarians, who have fact-based occupations, naturally gravitate to advocating for access to government information. Don advocated for citizens exercising their rights under those laws. He encourages "citizen lobbyists" to develop a passionate interest in government transparency and public policy.

Don understands the politics around these issues as well as the legal implications.

Don works tirelessly to help the public understand their right to gain access to government data. With MNCOGI, he does this through education activities, recognizing those on the front line of data fights, working with the Legislature and sometimes litigating.

He says computer technology is making it much easier to destroy vast troves of information that would have been impractical to search through and dispose of in paper form.

Email deletion is an ongoing issue. The Minnesota Department of Human Services began to delete emails more than a year old under a new policy unless workers decide the messages contain official government records.

As [he wrote in 2020](#): "By not asking for the data to which we are entitled, we sacrifice our ability to learn what our government is doing.

"Real transparency is more than waiting for the government to hand out data to us. Real transparency involves demanding data from the government and fighting, if necessary, to force the government to provide it."

Sincerely,
Hal Davis
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Saint Paul, Minnesota