



Michigan Press Association Announces 2020 Rep. Peter Pettalia Memorial Sunshine Award Winners to Kick Off Sunshine Week in Michigan

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The Michigan Press Association annually gives the Rep. Peter Petallia Memorial Sunshine Award to public servants that strive to promote and protect transparency in government. The award is named after former State Representative Peter Pettalia of Presque Isle who embodied all good things in governing especially support of the citizens in his community and an understanding of the importance of keeping them informed through a transparent government.

This year's recipients are Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel and Ingham County Clerk Barb Byrum.

Clerk Byrum has been an advocate for openness since her days in the Michigan House of Representatives. She was one of the first legislators to approach MPA to jointly work on legislation that would improve the Freedom of Information Act in Michigan. As the clerk of Ingham County, she has been active in promoting ethics changes that would improve openness and continues to be a supporter of maintaining the integrity of public notices in print.

Attorney General Nessel has worked since the beginning of her tenure to promote openness at the state level and has strengthened use of FOIA and OMA in her own department. Since taking office she has partnered with MPA and member news organizations around the state and has conducted five FOIA/OMA sessions in Michigan communities, talking about Michigan's open government laws and their importance. She intends to continue these sessions, which serve to educate citizens and local government officials about the laws and their importance to good governance.

"These 2020 Sunshine Award winners again show that the working of government is always better when the press – and citizens - are involved instead of excluded. Open government is good government. These two winners exemplify the ideals that Rep. Petallia strove for every day in his distinguished elected career. We need more elected officials like them," said Dirk Milliman, Chariman of the MPA Public Policy Committee.

"We feel that our awardees this year both exemplify "good government" in the way they conduct their office and expect it from others."

Sunshine Week is the annual nationwide celebration of access to public information and what it means for you and your community. It will be celebrated this year from March 15-21. Keep an eye on your local newspapers to see what you can do to shine light on your government.