



2025 Sunshine Op-Ed

Restoring Trust with Transparency

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Freedom of the press is important to those who have chosen to be journalists and serve as the peoples' watchdogs in America for almost 250 years.

Many feel that the First Amendment is in peril. Trust in the media has eroded at every level. Continuous allegations of "fake news" continue to permeate social media and "new" media...often targeting legacy media who will not report a certain opinion but rather continue to rely on facts. In Michigan, this is not helped by the fact that our "Capitol Press Corps" has limited access to information about the legislature and the executive office.

For a decade, proponents of open government in the legislature and the public have pushed to remove the exemption our governor and legislators have from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). For five consecutive legislative sessions, this effort has been shut down.

This year, the state senate showed a strong willingness to advance these bills by making them the first and second bills introduced in the session. They then went ahead to pass them out of the senate to the house...where they have once again been stiff-armed.

Newspapers, small and large around the country, have been threatened with lack of access – and worse – for not capitulating to a certain political narrative. In Michigan, we continue to fight for access to what should be public records from our legislature and governor but both are currently exempt from FOIA. Which leads us to keep asking these elected officials, "What have you got to hide?"

There are things you can do to help strengthen your rights and press freedom. Let your state representative know you want to see transparency in the State Capitol. Join your community newspaper in celebrating Sunshine Week, March 16-22, a nonpartisan collaboration among groups in the journalism, civic, education, government and private sectors that shines a light on the importance of public records and open government.