

## Spread The Sunshine

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MPA presents the Peter Pettalia Memorial Sunshine Award to those in public service who consistently exhibit support for transparency in every level of government.

We also spend a week celebrating transparency in government in the middle of March every year. Sunshine Week is the annual nationwide celebration of access to public information and what it means for you and your community.

## The Business of Newspapering

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Newspapers are an integral part of their communities and employ nearly 12,000 people across Michigan.

MPA closely monitors legislation that involves business taxes, employee wages and other issues that impact our member's bottom line.

MPA urges legislators to avoid taxation and regulations that will impose an undue burden on our members and their business.

*If you have questions or wish to discuss any of these issues please feel free to contact MPA Public Affairs Manager Lisa McGraw 313-247-9859 or email [lisa@michiganpress.org](mailto:lisa@michiganpress.org)*



## Michigan Legislative Agenda



*Photo by Margaret O'Brien*

*The principles used to develop this legislative agenda flow from the understanding that a free and robust press is vital to democracy and that transparency in government is necessary to instilling trust in Michigan's citizens.*

# Making Our Government More Accountable to the People

*“ Information breeds confidence. Silence breeds fear.”*

*~ From The West Wing*

## FOIA Reforms

FOIA reform is a top priority. Enacting legislation that will subject the legislature and the Governor to the same laws as other public officials. MPA will be working with our partners to get this vital legislation enacted. We truly believe that improving transparency in these bodies will help lift Michigan out of the basement regarding public integrity.

In addition to the legislature and Governor being subject to FOIA, we recognize that other reforms need to take place. High costs, delays and prolonged appeals do nothing to restore the public's faith in government.

## Forming an Open Government Commission

We will also be continuing our conversation with legislators about forming an Open-Government Commission that would be charged with handling FOIA/OMA appeals, education of elected officials and generally improve the transparency in our state.

## Open Meetings

Open Meetings provide a forum for public input on issues facing governmental bodies. Whether in person or electronically, MPA recognizes this is a more complex era and that some discretion is necessary for the efficient working of government, but The Open Meetings Act must be examined and strengthened to ensure that openness, NOT SECRECY, is the principle under which our governments operate.

All government proceedings need to take place with transparency as a goal. Proper notice and the encouragement of public participation are key.

## Public Notice

MPA will continue our efforts to make public notices accessible to the citizens of Michigan and maintain the tenants of good public notice:

- Permanence of record - newspapers provide a permanent legal record of the actions government officials at every level are taking.
- Archivability - newspapers and libraries across the state retain copies of these records in perpetuity.
- Independence - newspapers provide an independent source that serves as a watchdog of governmental activities.
- Accessibility-making sure notices are available to citizens where they are looking. Both in print and online.



## State agency advertising set-aside for local newspapers

We would like the legislature to require state agencies to set aside a percentage of their ad/messaging budget for use in a broad range of local and hyperlocal news publications.

We believe the judicious, accountable use of government ad spending is a powerful and sensible tool to help local news and the communities they serve. If done well, it can strengthen local journalism and communities.

1. It can provide substantial revenue to local news organizations and help community journalism thrive.
2. It is money the government is already spending—not new money—so it does not require enlarging state or local budgets or raising taxes.
3. Government messages should reach a full range of residents, including those that may not be using larger media.
4. As advertising, it is payment for a service rendered, not a subsidy per se.
5. Advertising in community news helps government be more effective by reaching audiences through community and ethnic publications that are more trusted in their communities.

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