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The Sunshine Report: Online Transparency news from the Virginia Coalition for Open Government June 2010

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Coalition News

Recently on the VCOG Blog...

- [FOIA tips and strategies](#)
- [Economic Development: Surprise!](#)

Mark your calendars:

VCOG's Annual Conference

Join us Oct. 21-22 for VCOG's next annual conference. A board-hosted dinner is slated for the 21st at the [Commonwealth Park Suites Hotel](#) in Richmond. All conference sessions are slated for Friday the 22nd in House Room 3 of the [State Capitol](#). Stay tuned for programming and registration information.

We're looking for open government heroes

VCOG is seeking nominations for its annual FOI awards in the categories of citizens, press and government. Awards will be given out at our annual conference in October. To nominate an open government hero, [click here](#).

VCOG, MCLE and me

VCOG's Power-Point presentation on Virginia FOIA has been approved for 1 hour of continuing legal education credit by the State Bar of Virginia. To schedule a quick, easy and relatively low-cost presentation at your next luncheon or bar association, contact [Megan Rhyme](#) to arrange a time.

Daily email alert

* required

Email Address: *

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Greetings, Friend of VCOG!

UVA home to two open-government imbroglios

It was a cruel spring at Mr. Jefferson's University. In what should have been a time of flowering dogwoods and days of hope and promise for the future, the University of Virginia found itself in the midst of two issues of national interest, and both including a transparency element.

The first, and most regrettable, is the murder of UVA women's lacrosse player Yeardeley Love, presumably at the hands of men's lacrosse player, George Huguely.

The second issue roiling The Grounds involves global warming, and, more specifically the question of whether the science underlying global warming science may be dubious.

[Read more](#) on the VCOG website.

VCOG hosts NFOIC conference and FOIA workshop

Early May's national NFOIC conference in Arlington, co-hosted by VCOG, attracted approximately 50 open government experts and enthusiasts. VCOG's board had a strong showing: Lucy Dalglish and Ginger Stanley served on a panel about FOIA litigation; Frosty Landon, Tom Moncure and Dorothy Abernathy attended sessions; and Megan Rhyme provided support, including videotaping portions of the conference. Additional panels were on transparency in the digital age and fundraising strategies. The federal government's first FOIA Ombudsman, Miriam Nisbet, gave the keynote address. A full wrap-up of the conference can be found on the [NFOIC website](#).

More than 40 people gave up their Saturday afternoon, May 22, to attend the Access Across America FOIA workshop, presented by David Cuillier of the Society of Professional Journalists. Cuillier's blog chronicles his journey around the country to share tips and strategies for gaining access to public records. Here's [his entry on his only stop in Virginia](#), sponsored by VCOG and hosted at the Virginia Press Association headquarters.

Open government news

A Fort Defiance man is suing the Augusta County Board of Equalization for violating FOIA by improperly keeping the public out of his assessment appeal, and for [failing to keep proper minutes](#). A decision has been postponed.....The *Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk went to court in early May to [force city schools to turn over records](#) related to testing irregularities at a middle school. A judge delayed a decision and the parties are due back in court in July.... A judge ruled May 7 that the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors [violated Virginia's Freedom of Information Act](#) and awarded \$6,750 in legal fees to an Axton woman who alleged the board held two improper closed meetings. The county indicated it would not

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appeal..... The Front Royal Town Council is under fire for [not properly certifying its closed sessions](#). FOIA says a public body must confirm in the minutes of the open session that only specific topics were discussed in closed sessions. Some council members said they "couldn't remember" if they'd voted, and one member told a reporter that they didn't stick to the topics it was supposed to.

How-to on YouTube

In May, VCOG added another video tutorial to [its YouTube Channel](#). A how-to on public meetings – what is and what isn't one – joins other tutorials on making a FOIA request; fees for records; proper FOIA responses; and record exemptions. You'll also find a 7-minute slide show overview of FOIA.

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Virginia Coalition for Open Government
P.O. Box 2576
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187

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