



FOIFT will Hold Annual Conference in Austin

DALLAS – The Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas wants open government for all and its annual conference will focus on just how accomplish that. This year's, View from the Summit, will feature open government experts examining how current trends in technology and privatization are affecting FOI, discussing existing laws that might need clarification or procedural corrections and looking at the future of open government on the state and federal levels.

The Bernard and Audre Rapoport FOIFT State Conference will be held Friday, Sept. 12, at the new AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center on the UT Austin campus.

Lucy Dalglish, executive director of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, will be the keynote speaker at the John Henry Faulk Awards Luncheon. She will give an update on the state of open government at the federal level. Presentation of the James Madison Award by the FOIFT and the Gavel Awards by the State Bar of Texas highlight the luncheon.

This year's James Madison Award recipient is John Washburn, a software tester and citizen activist from Wisconsin, who challenged the Texas governor's policy of deleting E-mails after only seven days. The James Madison Award is given annually to honor those who demonstrate outstanding commitment and service in upholding the principles of the First Amendment. The Gavel Awards recognize journalistic excellence that helps foster public understanding of our legal and judicial system.

The opening panel will examine how, while privatizing some government functions may save money, it can create barriers to access to information. Brian Collister, investigative reporter at WOAI TV, will moderate "The Public's Business – In Private Hands" where participants will discuss what can be done to protect citizen's access to those types of records.

Wanda Garner Cash, clinical professor and fellow at the University of Texas at Austin, will moderate "To Tweak or Not To Tweak – Do We Make Things Better?" The second panel will discuss whether clarifying certain existing laws will improve them or cause unforeseen problems.

As the Legislature tries to keep up with the rapidly changing landscape of technology, government officials and citizens are caught in the middle. Juan Elizondo, managing editor of the *Longview News-Journal*, will moderate the third session "With the Push of a Button – Technology and Open Government" and look at how current trends in technology are affecting freedom of information.

The day will end with a moderated round-table discussion that will look at ways organizations can work together to produce a positive open government agenda. Joel White, proprietor of Joel R. White and Associates, and Fred Zipp, editor of the Austin American-Statesman, will moderate "Working Together – for a Better View" Roundtable participants will look at what needs to be addressed in the upcoming Legislative session using points that have been raised during the day.

Early registration is \$100 through Aug. 29. After Aug. 29, the registration is \$150. Registration is available for the conference on the FOIFT Web site, www.foift.org or by calling the FOIFT office at 214.989.3215. Hotel accommodations are available at the AT&T Executive Education and Conference Center: The rate is \$139 per night for a single or double and can be made by calling the hotel's reservation department at 1.877.744.8822. The room rate deadline is Aug. 20.

The Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas works to encourage, sponsor and facilitate a greater appreciation, knowledge and understanding of the First Amendment. By educating media and legal professionals, educators, students, public and government officials and individual citizens about their rights and responsibilities as citizens, the FOIFT strives to preserve the freedoms necessary in a democratic republic. The Freedom of Information Foundation of Texas is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization supported through grants from private citizens, corporations, foundations and tax-deductible donations. For more information, call 214.989.3215, or visit our Web site at www.foift.org.