

***Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government***  
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## **Eagle extraordinary on behalf of Sunshine laws**

The Wichita Eagle is a winner of the Above and Beyond Award from the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government. The award is given to media outlets and other concerned organizations that show extraordinary efforts in the cause of open meetings and open records.

The Eagle's use of its news resources on behalf of open government may be unprecedented in Kansas, said Randy Brown, executive director of the Sunshine Coalition. "The newspaper has taken the leading role in educating Kansans about their rights under Kansas law," he said.

The Eagle's most recent push began during Sunshine Week in 2007. The newspaper devoted two full pages to the state's Sunshine laws and citizen rights. The Eagle also launched a weekly informational column – "You Oughta Know" – on the cover of its Local and State section. More than 100 columns later, "You Oughta Know" is still telling Kansans how they can use the law to push for government transparency.

"I don't know of any newspaper in America that has sustained such an effort," said Brown. "And that's in addition to the Eagle's good work with the Legislature and local governments in the cause of openness."

Just last week, the newspaper uncovered a violation of the Kansas Open Meetings Act by the Wichita City Council. It was the second such violation by the city in less than a year.

Eagle Editor Sherry Chisenhall will receive the award Friday night at the Orpheum Theater in Wichita during the 2009 Gridiron Show. The show is produced annually by the Kansas Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, a charter member of the Sunshine Coalition.

This is only the second Above and Beyond award given by the Coalition, now located in the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University, since its founding in 1999. The Lawrence Journal-World won the first award. The Topeka Capital-Journal also will be honored this year.