



CONNECTICUT FOUNDATION FOR OPEN GOVERNMENT

Date: Sept. 11, 2025
Contact: Denis Horgan
Email: denis@bluefoot.tv

Connecticut Foundation for Open Government Announces Winners of its Fourth Annual Pearlman Freedom of Information Award

The Connecticut Foundation for Open Government (CFOG) is pleased to announce that a Connecticut Inside Investigator reporter, two legislative leaders and a statewide housing collective have been selected to receive the fourth annual Mitchell W. Pearlman Freedom of Information Award.

The award honors government officials, journalists and residents of Connecticut who have made significant efforts to foster transparency in government, disclose information vital to the public and ensure that state residents can see their government at work. It is named for Pearlman, the founding executive director of Connecticut's Freedom of Information Commission and an international expert on government transparency, privacy and the First Amendment.

The honorees are journalist Katherine Revello, House Majority Leader Jason Rojas and House Minority Leader Vincent J. Candelora and The Housing Collective of Bridgeport and its Eastern Connecticut and Fairfield County Centers for Housing Opportunity.

When CFOG bestows its awards on Thursday, Oct. 9, it will also present a special Pearlman FOI Award to Colleen M. Murphy, the executive director and general counsel of the state FOI Commission. She is being honored in 2025 as Connecticut is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the creation of its FOI Act and the commission.

The reception will take place from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Mark Twain House & Museum at 351 Farmington Ave. in Hartford. Tickets are \$40 per person and can be purchased at <https://tinyurl.com/CFOGPearlman> or by mailing a check with the number of desired tickets to Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, 35 Bunker Hill Road, Glastonbury, CT 06033. The event will feature complimentary hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer and soda.

A steadfast advocate for open government, Murphy is marking her 35th year as an attorney with the commission and her 20th year as its leader. She has assisted countless journalists and members of the public in securing access to public meetings and public records while ensuring that the FOI law is upheld. Murphy is a frequent speaker on government transparency and privacy, has taught at the University of Connecticut School of Law and has testified frequently before the state legislature when efforts have been made to erode the FOI Act.

Murphy has served on CFOG's board since its inception and is a director of the National Freedom of Information Coalition.

Revello is a Connecticut Inside Investigator reporter whose work focuses on the First Amendment and issues surrounding the public's access to government records.

Revello, who has promoted government accountability across New England, won the 2024 New England First Amendment Award from the New England Newspaper and Press Association. In addition to writing 156 articles in the past year about FOI issues, she often helps the public in navigating records requests. Her editor, Conner Drigotas, said that Revello has placed an essential spotlight on stories that otherwise would have gone untold.

She launched a biweekly series called Transparency Update, a behind-the-curtains look at how newsrooms work to overcome barriers to open government. She has also taken multiple challenges to the FOI Commission against towns, agencies and state universities that were withholding records she believed the public was entitled to see.

In the Public Official category, CFOG is jointly honoring Rojas, a Democrat from East Hartford, and Candelora, a Republican from North Branford, for defending transparency in the face of efforts to shield more government action from the public.

In nominating them, Murphy and Pearlman Committee co-chair David Fink wrote that the legislators worked in a bipartisan fashion to defeat several bills this year that would have created new records exemptions in the FOI Act. One bill would have established a nearly wholesale exemption for higher education records "pertaining to teaching or research."

Murphy and Fink wrote that Rojas and Candelora "project dignity and earn respect with their reserve and intelligence." They added that the legislators are open-minded and thoughtful when approaching tough issues and have stood up to those who sought to carve out new exemptions in the law.

In the General Public category, CFOG is honoring The Housing Collective and its regional housing centers. CFOG notes that the collective is a model for other organizations in the way it has empowered Connecticut residents to understand how their government works.

Its centers shine a light on local government and help residents to easily access policymakers and the forums where local land-use decisions are made. Each week, the centers publish a full list of land-use commission meetings in their region, including the housing and development proposals that will be considered at the meetings.

They also explain how residents can become members of land-use boards and how land-use decisions are made. In July, the collective released a report, "Room at the Table," that found that women, people of color and renters are severely underrepresented on Connecticut land-use boards.

"If every organization in important policy realms promoted this kind of government understanding, access and transparency, residents would be much more likely to understand – and trust – government officials," Fink said.

CFOG will honor David Rich, executive director of The Housing Collective, Beth Sabilia, the director of the Center for Housing Opportunity in Eastern Connecticut, and Melissa Kaplan-Macey, the chief initiative officer of the Centers for Housing Opportunity.