

# Citizens deserve to have transparency

Every day, citizens fight their government for the information they are guaranteed but cannot get openly.

Every day, journalists who are doing the people's work fight to keep government accountable and open so citizens can know what they are entitled to know.

In a perfect society, government would have nothing to hide and information would flow freely on every level, from officials to constituents and from the elected to the electors.

No society, no government, no media organization is perfect, so the dance between openness and privacy goes on.

This week, March 14-20, is Sunshine Week, a time set aside to showcase the importance of open government and the people's right to information and records. This goes all the way from local villages, school boards and towns to 1600 Pennsylvania Ave.

Good government officials know that they are always accountable to the people and don't try to hide things they have the responsibility to put in the open. They know that the light must always shine on the people's government.

The sad truth is that public officials don't always do what they should in the light, and too much happens in the dark, out of the public's view or in improper or illegal manners. That's why good journalists must always have their flashlights ready and not fear shining them into dark corners.

This week reminds everyone—government officials and employees, as well as the media and other citizens—what the purpose of government is. We all need to remember that those elected and the people they hire always work for the public and should be open and honest about their business.

The law provides narrow reasons to keep things from the public—but closed meetings and withheld records should always be the rare exception to the rule of openness.

As local watchdogs, we appreciate the relative openness of our local officials, but we will always push back when the curtain closes improperly. Most times, it's an oversight, but that can lead to more serious withholding of information.

The media is just the eyes and ears of the public, and citizens should always consider themselves welcome to public meetings and know they are a key part of the process. Government works for us, not the other way around.

Enjoy the sunshine this week and always.

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## In Our Opinion

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