Groups announce FOI Summit keynote speaker and panelists

Open government advocates will hear from award-winning technologist, civic leaders and freedom of information experts.

COLUMBIA, Mo. (April 10, 2013) — Waldo Jaquith, the award-winning "open government technologist" who developed the White House's *Ethics.gov* tool and an ongoing project to put all 50 states' laws, court decisions and legislative tracking information on a user-friendly Web platform, will be the keynoter at the 2013 FOI Summit in New Orleans.

The National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) and the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana (PAR) jointly announced Jaquith's selection as speaker for the May 18 Keynote/Hall Of Fame luncheon.

The FOI Summit, a national conference concentrating on open government convened anually in collaboration with the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ), will be held Friday, May 17, and Saturday, May 18, at the Renaissance Arts Hotel in New Orleans. PAR is the state-based co-host for this year's Summit.

Jaquith, a website developer, is a John S. and James L. Knight Foundation News Challenge Fellow and the creator of The State Decoded, a free Web application created to parse and display legal codes in a friendly, open manner.

In 2011, he was named a "Champion of Change" by the White House and, in 2012, the Sunlight Foundation called him an "OpenGov Champion."

Jaquith is credited with developing the Obama administration's *Ethics.gov* Web portal, forerunner of *Data.gov*, a website that makes it easier for people to access high-value, machine-readable datasets produced by the executive branch. He remains a member of the White House Open Data Working Group. He, his wife and son live near Charlottesville, Va.

Jaquith says that he develops software "the way some people paint or knit. It's a creative process."

Jaquith joins an impressive list of speakers and presenters for the Summit that includes civic leaders and FOI advocates and experts on open government issues and the First Amendment.

"Waldo is the kind of big-ideas innovator who uses his skills as a computer programmer to expand the possibilities for making government transparent and accessible," said Kenneth F. Bunting, executive director of NFOIC. "And, the great speakers, panels and presentations that will surround his Saturday appearance all but guarantee that Summit attendees will leave the gathering primed for changes and innovations that make a significant difference."

The complete list of distinguished panelists and speakers includes:

> *David Marcello*, president of the Public Law Center at Tulane University;
> *Barbara Petersen*, executive director of the First Amendment Foundation (Florida);
> *Mark Horvit*, executive director of Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE);
> *Joey Senat*, associate professor of Media and Strategic Communication, Oklahoma State;
> *Daniel Lathrop*, investigative reporter, *Dallas Morning News*;
> *Robert Becker*, whose Washington, D.C.-based solo practice specializes in access issues;
> *Tod Anthony Smith*, president and general manager of WWL-TV, New Orleans;
> *Peter Scheer*, executive director of the First Amendment Coalition (California);
> *Scott Sternberg*, a New Orleans media law and access attorney;
> *Michael Reitz*, executive vice president of Mackinac Center for Public Policy;
> *Linda Lightfoot*, recently retired executive editor of *The Advocate*;
> *Robert Scott*, president of Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana (PAR);
> *Hyde Post*, journalist and consultant, and president of the NFOIC board of directors;
> *Steve Beatty*, editor of *The Lens*, online news outlet based in New Orleans;
> *Anne-Marie Taylor*, a political and nonprofit fundraising expert from Dallas;
> *Terry Ryder*, attorney who served Lousiana Gov. Jindal and three former governors;
> *S.L. (Sherry Lee) Alexander*, associate professor at Loyola University;
> *Patrice McDermott*, executive director, *OpentheGovernment.org*;
> *Gordon Russell*, investigative team editor, *The Times Picayune*;
> *Lori Mince*, a New Orleans media law attorney;
> *Shawn Musgrave*, projects editor at MuckRock;
> *Megan Rhyne*, executive director of the Virginia Coalition for Open Government.

Registration fees for the event range from $95 for Summit access that includes an NFOIC individual membership to $35 for students presenting a valid ID. The registration fee covers admittance to all sessions and panels, Friday's reception, a breakfast Saturday morning at the annual members' meeting, Saturday's lunch, and Saturday's reception.

NFOIC is a nonpartisan alliance of citizen-driven nonprofit freedom of information organizations, academic and First Amendment centers, journalistic societies and attorneys. It traces its origins and history to national assemblies that state freedom of information (FOI) advocates held in Dallas in 1989 and 1991. Headquartered at the Missouri School of Journalism since 2005, the organization promotes open government by supporting a broad range of groups and endeavors in individual states.

Besides supporting and coalescing its state and regional affiliate organizations, the NFOIC administers the Knight FOI Fund, which offers financial support to defray costs and expenses in open government lawsuits throughout the year. It offers a national, collective voice on freedom of information and transparency issues.

PAR is a private, nonprofit, non-partisan public policy research organization founded in 1950. In addition to serving as a catalyst for governmental reform, PAR also has a program of citizen education, believing that the soundest way to achieve political progress is through deep-rooted public understanding and support.

The Summit shines a light on the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and offers an opportunity for NFOIC members and others to get a clear view of disclosure and access laws, state by state. The conference brings together access advocates from all over the country to highlight recent successes and share ideas for combating secrecy in the future.

Visit NFOIC's Summit homepage < http://www.nfoic.org/2013-foi-summit > for more information and future updates to the schedule and program.

-- 30 --