



Online Media Legal Network Partners with National Freedom of Information Coalition to Assist with Freedom of Information Lawsuits

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cambridge, MA – February 1, 2010 – The Berkman Center’s Online Media Legal Network (OMLN) announced today that it is partnering with the National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) to assist with freedom of information lawsuits and to provide online journalists with FOI information and assistance.

Earlier this year, the NFOIC received a \$2 million, three-year grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to launch the Knight FOI Fund and support state open government groups. The Knight FOI Fund will fund up-front costs such as court costs, filing fees, depositions and initial consultation fees, if attorneys are willing to take freedom of information cases that otherwise would go unfiled.

OMLN, which launched in November 2009 with funding from the Knight Foundation, is a referral network for lawyers and law school clinics that wish to offer legal assistance to online journalists and other digital media creators. Lawyers participating in OMLN provide qualifying clients with free and reduced fee legal assistance on a broad range of legal issues, including business formation and governance, copyright licensing and fair use, freelancer agreements, access to government information, pre-publication review of content, and representation in litigation. The network is administered through OMLN’s website at <http://www.omln.org/>.

As part of the partnership, OMLN will help identify appropriate cases for the Knight FOI Fund and will make its growing network of media lawyers available to help the NFOIC and its state coalitions pursue the most promising cases. “We are excited to be working with the NFOIC on this critically important issue,” said David Ardia, Director of the OMLN. “We’ve clearly seen a decline in the number of FOI cases because news organization simply can’t afford the legal costs of bringing suit. The Knight FOI Fund will help to reverse this trend.”

“We’re thrilled to partner with the OMLN to help online journalists with FOI issues, and thanks to the Knight Foundation’s generous support, we’re in position to fight the never-ending battle for open government,” added Charles Davis, Executive Director of the NFOIC. “The NFOIC and the OMLN are working together to make government at the state and local level more transparent and accountable.”

About the National Freedom of Information Coalition

The NFOIC is a national network of state freedom of information advocates, citizen-driven nonprofit freedom of information organizations, academic and First Amendment centers, journalistic societies and attorneys. A unit of the [Missouri School of Journalism](#), the NFOIC is an affiliate of the [Donald W. Reynolds Journalism Institute](#). Its mission is to foster government transparency at the state and local level. NFOIC is based at the University of Missouri, home to the nation's oldest Freedom of Information Center. For more, visit <http://www.nfoic.org/>.

About the Online Media Legal Network

The Online Media Legal Network is an initiative of the [Citizen Media Law Project](#) at Harvard University's [Berkman Center for Internet & Society](#). The Citizen Media Law Project, which began operations in May 2007, provides assistance, training, research, and other resources for individuals and organizations involved in online and citizen media. For more information, visit <http://www.omln.org/>.

About the Berkman Center for Internet & Society

[The Berkman Center for Internet & Society](#) at Harvard University is a research program founded to explore cyberspace, share in its study, and help pioneer its development. Founded in 1997, through a generous gift from Jack N. and Lillian R. Berkman, the Center is home to an ever-growing community of faculty, fellows, staff, and affiliates working on projects that span the broad range of intersections between cyberspace, technology, and society. More information can be found at <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu>.

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Contact:

Seth Young
Berkman Center for Internet & Society
syoung@cyber.law.harvard.edu
617-384-9135

Charles N. Davis
National Freedom of Information Coalition
daviscn@missouri.edu
573-882-5736