

# Freedom of Information Commission

## *At a Glance*

**COLLEEN M. MURPHY**, *Executive Director/General Counsel*  
**Mary E. Schwind**, *Managing Director/Associate General Counsel*  
**Thomas A. Hennick**, *Public Education Officer*

*Established – 1975*

*Statutory authority – CGS Section 1-200 et. Seq.*

*Central office – 18-20 Trinity Street,  
Hartford, CT 06106*

*Number of Employees – 15*

*Recurring operating expenses – \$ 1,697,599*

*Organizational structure – Commission*

## **Mission**

*To ensure citizen access to the records and meetings of all public agencies in Connecticut*

## **Statutory Responsibility**

To ensure that all public agencies comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

## **Public Service**

The Commission holds hearings and renders decisions on citizen complaints alleging denial of access under the FOIA. It also conducts educational programs and prepares literature for public officials and the general public.

## **Improvements/Achievements 2012-2013**

The Commission continued its efforts to efficiently tackle its heavy volume of contested cases, placing emphasis on its ombudsman program as it had done the previous year. In 2012, staff resolved 522, or 71%, of the 730 cases, without a hearing. The remaining 208, or 29%, either went to a hearing or are scheduled for a hearing.

Nonetheless, the continuing heavy proliferation of formal complaints makes accomplishing such efficiencies a formidable task. The Commission now averages more than 770 formal complaints a year, with 807 in calendar year 2008, 792 in 2009, 806 in 2010, 719 in 2011 and 730 in 2012. As of August 1, 2013, the Commission was on pace to receive in excess of 800 complaints this calendar year. Prior to 2006, the highest number of complaints ever received by the Commission was 676 in 2000.

In other matters of interest:

- The Commission continued to be a standard-bearer for governmental transparency and accountability worldwide. In June, commissioners and staff hosted a group of governmental officials on a study mission from Liberia. These officials are involved in the implementation of FOI laws in Liberia, after years of civil war and unrest in that country. They, as well as officials from other countries, look to Connecticut's FOIC for guidance.
- The Commission, with the support of the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, unveiled its community outreach program aimed at the state's minority communities. A pilot program is underway targeting Spanish-speaking citizens. The program features Spanish-language videos and literature and is being distributed statewide.
- The Commission, again with the support of the Connecticut Foundation for Open Government, expanded the use of its new educational video in 2013. The video offers insight into the rich history of Freedom of Information in Connecticut as well as examples of the need for open and accessible government. The video, completed in 2012, is now being shared with citizens and public officials throughout the state.
- The Commission has provided an average of 84 speakers a year at a variety of venues for the past 5 years. A total of 94 speaking programs were offered in 2012. Between 90 and 95 are anticipated for 2013.

### **Reducing Waste**

The Commission is committed to regular reviews of its current operating procedures aimed at reducing waste and increasing efficiency.

### **Strategic Planning**

- Hear and resolve cases in a timely fashion;
- Settle contested cases informally through ombudsman program;
- Defend the Commission through staff counsel in court appeals;
- Conduct workshops, provide speakers, publish Commission reports and other literature;
- Develop public policy positions with regard to issues of information accessibility, especially as they relate to such matters as emerging information technologies;
- Render declaratory rulings of general applicability under the FOIA;
- Expand and broaden community outreach program and
- Refine and expand training program for advisory board members and agency liaisons.

### **Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

The Commission is committed to equal employment opportunities for all.