



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

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The Kansas Sunshine Coalition, now based at the Elliott School of Communication at Wichita State University, is honoring three Kansas senators with its 2005 Friends of Open Government award.

Sen. Kay O'Connor, R-Olathe, Sen. Tim Huelskamp, R-Fowler, and Sen. Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, are being cited for their efforts in the 2005 legislative session, as well as their long-term commitment to the cause of open government.

"Sen. Hensley has been called a bulldog for open government," said Randy Brown, executive director of the Coalition and a senior fellow at WSU. "Sen. O'Connor went to great lengths to work with all sides in the 2005 sunshine debate, and Sen. Huelskamp has been an equally persistent friend of the public's right to know. All three have been fighting the good fight for a long time."

Although typically a difficult venue for sunshine issues, the Senate in 2005 helped push through a number of open government initiatives. SB78 requires that all county and district attorneys report annually on all open records and open meetings complaints they receive. Another sunshine initiative makes public any compensation agreements, public or private, involving anyone in a public position. Yet another requires that the records of private research contracts for faculty members at Kansas universities be open to the public.

Doug Anstaett, executive director of the Kansas Press Association and coalition board member, praised all three senators for their work on the sunshine initiatives. "Tim Huelskamp was a leading advocate for open government during the 2005 legislative session. We could not have accomplished so much without his leadership," Anstaett said. "We can always count on Kay O'Connor to not only throw her support behind critical open government issues, but to lead

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the charge. And as Senate minority leader and throughout his career, Anthony Hensley has been a critical and consistent supporter of open government for the citizens of Kansas.”

Brown points out that the campaign for open government crosses all party and ideological lines, citing this year’s winners. Past Friends of Open Government include the late Sen. Janice Hardenburger, R-Haddam; Wichita Mayor Carlos Mayans, a former House member; Rep. Joanne Pottorff, R-Wichita; and Rep. Jene Vickrey, R-Louisburg.

The Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government is composed of media representatives, teachers, students and other citizens who believe that open government is essential to a democratic society – and that only through full access to government records and meetings can Kansans make intelligent and informed decisions about their democracy.

The main purpose of the Coalition is to enhance awareness of open government issues.

“Our members help keep the public informed of the abuses of open government and hold elected officials accountable for those actions that ignore the public's right to truly public meetings and records,” Brown said.

For more information on the Coalition contact Randy Brown at 316-978-6080 or [randy.brown@wichita.edu](mailto:randy.brown@wichita.edu) or [wsurandy@aol.com](mailto:wsurandy@aol.com).

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