

## **Sunshine forum**

For immediate release

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## **Kansas gets an ‘F’ in openness**

If open government is essential to a democratic society, then democracy in Kansas may be in trouble.

That’s the issue for a panel discussion, “Why Kansas is flunking the open government test,” Thursday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m., at the Eugene Hughes Metropolitan Center, 29<sup>th</sup> and Oliver, Room 185 (southeast corner). The public is invited at no charge.

The Better Government Association and the National Freedom of Information Coalition recently gave Kansas an “F” in a national study of freedom of information access. The study, said Charles Davis, executive director of the NFOIC, “is a cry for the reform of freedom of information laws nationwide.”

“Citizens have little or no recourse when faced with unlawful denial of access to their state’s FOI laws,” Davis said.

The association and the coalition looked at five important open government access points: response time to citizen requests, access to appeals, expedited review of cases, penalties for violations and citizen recovery of attorney’s fees and court costs.

Panelists include Randy Brown, executive director of the Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government; Dr. Pat Dooley, director of the graduate program in the Elliott School of Communication at WSU and media law professor; and Ron Sylvester, Wichita Eagle reporter and regional director of the Society of Professional Journalists.

The event is sponsored by the Elliott School, the Sunshine Coalition and the Kansas Professional and WSU Chapters of the SPJ.