



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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High-profile cases highlight judges-media workshop

The Kansas Sunshine Coalition for Open Government is co-sponsoring a Judges/Journalists Workshop Dec. 2 in the Supreme Court Courtroom in Topeka. “Our aim is to foster discussion between two institutions that have been forced into a symbiotic and occasionally contentious relationship,” said Ron Keefover, president of the Coalition.

Sessions will include the nuts and bolts of covering a high profile case – such as the Kobe Bryant litigation and a Kansas case involving a university professor convicted of bludgeoning his wife to death. Other sessions include judicial proscriptions involved in judicial media interviews, the current state of access to court proceedings and records, and an open microphone session in which the Supreme Court justices will field questions from the media.

Keefover said the reason judge-journalist relations are so important may best be summed up by retired Judge Alexander Sanders, the former President of Charleston College, who said: “There is an infinite number of variables that determine the quality of the democracy. We could list them for the rest of our lives, and we wouldn’t list them all. But there are only two on which the survival of the democracy depends, and they are a free press and an independent judiciary. You can’t have a democracy without those two things.”

“It is inevitable that courts and media will sometimes come into conflict as each perform their respective public service roles,” Keefover said. “Such tensions were built into the Constitution via the First and Sixth Amendments. But while the legal and journalism communities may sometimes disagree, neither needs to be disagreeable.”

The Sunshine Coalition, based at Wichita State University, is a coalition of citizens and organizations promoting openness in Kansas government. It is joining the Kansas Press Association, the Kansas Association of Broadcasters, the University of Kansas law school media and public law clinic, and the Kansas Bar Association a local sponsor of the daylong event. Principal sponsor of the seminar is the Reynolds National Center for Courts and Media in the National Judicial College at the University of Nevada in Reno.

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