

# Sunshine in Government Initiative

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## Media Coalition Honors Open Government Leaders

The Sunshine in Government Initiative (SGI) today honored Representatives Rick Boucher of Virginia and Mike Pence of Indiana for their commitment and work to strengthen open government. The coalition today presented its 2008 Sunshine Award to these lawmakers as part of its efforts to promote open government.

Representatives Boucher and Pence have strongly pushed for a federal shield law to protect a reporter's sources. Under their leadership shield legislation has gone much farther than ever through the halls of Congress. In October 2007, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 2102, the Free Flow of Information Act, with an overwhelming, bipartisan vote of 398-21. The Senate Judiciary Committee recently sent a similar bill to the Senate floor on a strong 15-4 vote. Both recipients have repeatedly reminded their colleagues and the American public that pressuring journalists to identify confidential sources damages a free press and an open, accountable democracy.

The *Sunshine Award* was created to honor individuals who have made a significant contribution over time to open government at the federal level. These recipients were selected for their extensive work to help ensure the public will be informed of government corruption, public health problems and other stories by strengthening federal protections that allow news sources to remain confidential. Protecting confidential sources and other right-to-know safeguards such as the Freedom of Information (FOIA) helps promote an open, accountable government.

When SGI created this award, the coalition charged the Selection Committee with finding recipients who met several criteria. Each recipient contributes significantly to the public's understanding of open government laws or how these laws impact people's everyday lives, protects the public's rights under open government laws such as the Freedom of Information Act; and serves in government making current, concrete and oftentimes unrecognized contributions to protecting or strengthening open government.

The award itself is a handsome clear sculptured obelisk reflecting the importance of transparency in government. More information about the award, including past recipients, can be found at [www.sunshineingovernment.org](http://www.sunshineingovernment.org).

The Sunshine in Government Initiative is a coalition of media groups committed to promoting policies that ensure the government is accessible, accountable and open. Public oversight is the ultimate safeguard of democracy. It is the inalienable right of citizens to examine and judge their government; and that right is served when news media act on behalf of the public to gain access to information.

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