

Conyers to headline FOI Day

News release

First Amendment Center Online staff
03.10.09

WASHINGTON — Rep. John Conyers Jr., D-Mich., will be the keynote speaker for the 11th annual National Freedom of Information Day Conference, kicking off this year's Sunshine Week events at the Newseum and across the nation.

The National FOI Day Conference, sponsored by the First Amendment Center, will be held on Friday, March 13, in the conference facilities at the Newseum located at 555 Pennsylvania Avenue (6th Street entrance, Knight Conference Center, 7th floor).

This year's event, "Freedom & Information: Looking Back & Looking Forward," is co-sponsored by Sunshine Week. Other participating organizations include the American Library Association, the Sunshine in Government Initiative, OpentheGovernment.org, and the Coalition of Journalists for Open Government.

There is no charge to attend, but because space is limited, participants must register individually in advance. To register send an e-mail to ahampton@freedomforum.org or call 202/292-6288. When registering, please provide your name, title, affiliation and contact information.

Conyers, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, will present the conference's keynote address, "State Secrets: Restoring Congressional Oversight," Friday morning at 11:00 a.m. He is one of the co-sponsors of the State Secret Protection Act of 2009, which was introduced to curb abuse of the privilege while providing protection for valid state secrets.

"We as a nation may be at a turning point when it comes to open government," said conference host and organizer [Ronald Collins](#), a scholar at the First Amendment Center in Washington. "Of course, that remains to be seen. Meanwhile, we should assess where we've been and where we need to go so far as freedom of information is concerned. This year's FOI conference addresses just such concerns," he added.

The conference agenda also includes a panel session on "The Last Eight Years: Freedom of Information in the Bush Era." David Vladeck, a Georgetown law professor, will present a paper followed by remarks from a panel moderated by Meredith Fuchs of the National Security Archive. The panelists will be: Mike German, national-security expert, American Civil Liberties Union; Mark Tapscott, editorial page editor, the *Washington Examiner*; [Richard A. Samp, chief counsel of the Washington Legal Foundation](#); and Professor Rena Steinzor of the University of Maryland School of Law.

Also during the conference, the American Library Association will bestow its James Madison Award on Thomas Susman, an attorney and member of the National FOIA Hall of Fame. The award, given annually to recognize outstanding achievement in championing access to government information and the public's right to know, will be presented by Nancy Kranich, former president of the ALA. "Tom has stood shoulder to shoulder with our nation's librarians in our efforts to make government information available to the public and our long, historic fights to protect library patrons' privacy," said ALA President Jim Rettig.