



# 20<sup>th</sup> Charles L. Weltner Freedom of Information Celebration

*honoring*

The Cox Family's Commitment to Open Government and Local Journalism



Oct. 27, 2022 | Emory Conference Center | Atlanta

CNN IS PROUD  
TO SUPPORT THE

# GEORGIA FIRST AMENDMENT FOUNDATION

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# Tonight's Program

## Welcome and Recognition of Special Guests

*Richard T. Griffiths, President Emeritus, Georgia First Amendment Foundation*

## Dinner

## Open Government Outlook

*Kathy Brister, President, Georgia First Amendment Foundation*

## Presentation of Open Government Hero Award to Jane Hansen

*Leah Ward Sears, former Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court*

## Introduction of Keynote Speaker

*Kevin Riley, Editor, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*

## Keynote Speech

*Alex Taylor, Chairman and CEO, Cox Enterprises*

## Presentation of 2022 Weltner Freedom of Information Award

*Susan Weltner Yow*

## Closing

*Richard T. Griffiths*

## Acknowledgements

*The Georgia First Amendment Foundation thanks the following sponsors for their support of tonight's banquet and our mission:*

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Thank you to our Weltner Banquet Chair Jon Peters and to Silvia Eaddy, Mack Freeman, Lenora Kopkin and Mike Luckovich for their contributions to the success of our banquet. Our board members contribute to the foundation's success and advancement of our mission year round; meet them at [gfaf.org/about/leadership](https://gfaf.org/about/leadership).



### About the Weltner Freedom of Information Award

Our award is named for Charles L. Weltner, a former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Georgia who championed freedom of information and ethics in state government. Our Weltner Banquet provides financial support for the foundation's transparency-focused and essential mission: fighting for free speech, freedom of the press and access to public meetings, proceedings and records in Georgia. Learn more at [gfaf.org/events/weltner-awards](https://gfaf.org/events/weltner-awards).

## Meet our speakers



**Richard T. Griffiths** serves as a distinguished fellow of journalism at the University of Georgia and the University of North Carolina. For 20 years, he oversaw editorial quality control at CNN. Before that, he worked at CBS News and in local news in Texas, Missouri and North Carolina. As a GFAF board member, he teaches about the importance of open government, community trust-building and local journalism.



**Kathy Brister**, president of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation, owns a media business serving corporate clients. She was a reporter at newspapers in Louisiana and Tennessee before joining *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, where she ultimately served as a senior editor working with journalists producing award-winning business and legislative news. She has served on GFAF's board of directors since 2015.



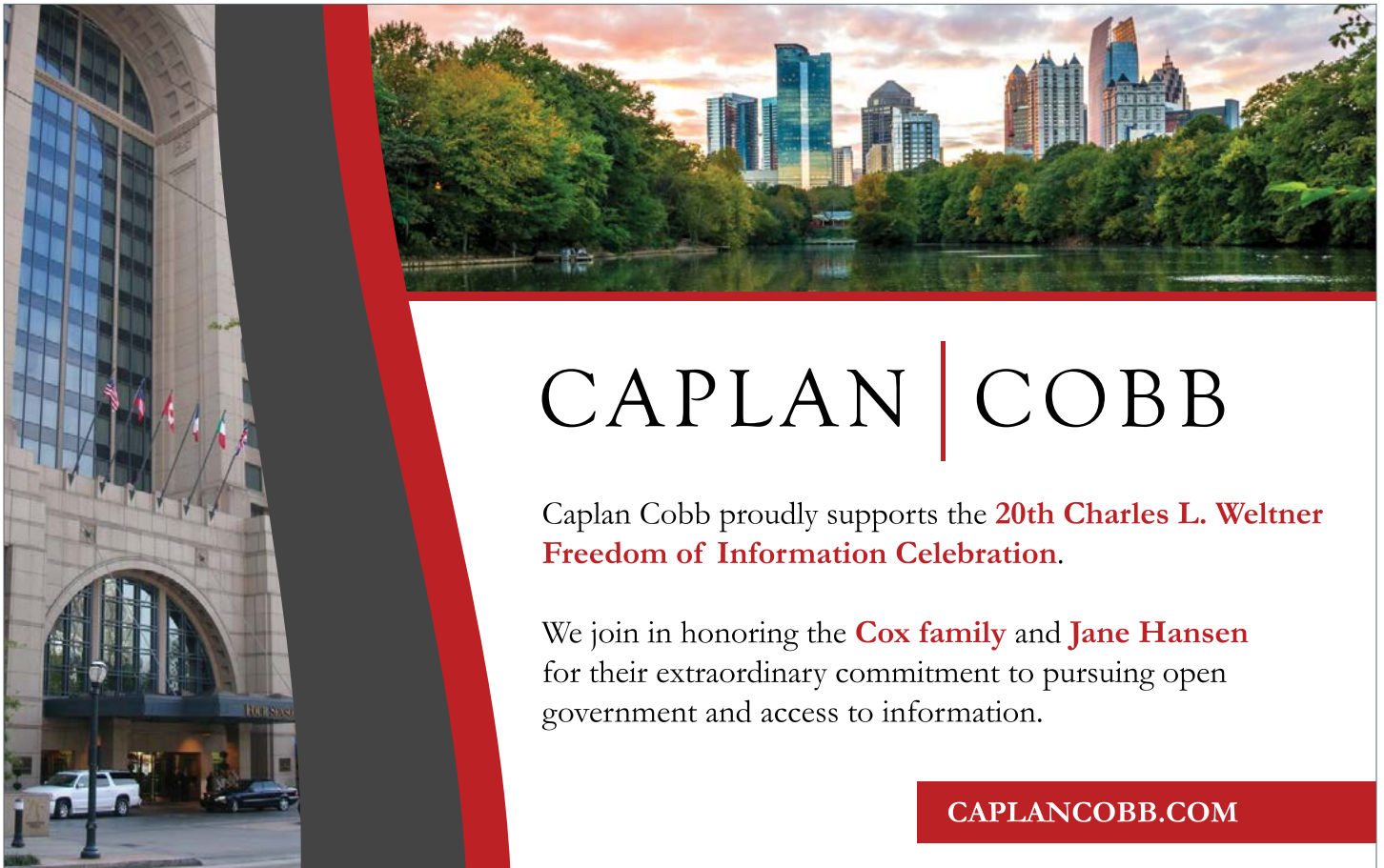
**Leah Ward Sears** is a partner in the litigation and appellate practice at Smith, Gambrell & Russell. Before returning to private practice, she served 17 years on the Supreme Court of Georgia, including four years as chief justice. Sears was the first woman to serve as a jurist on the Georgia Supreme Court and the Superior Court of Fulton County. She also was the first woman elected statewide in Georgia.



**Kevin Riley**, editor of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, began his career with Cox Enterprises at the Dayton Daily News. Under his leadership, the AJC has been a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and earned two Emmys for investigative broadcasts. He was part of the AJC's "Breakdown" podcast series, recounting his experience as jury foreman in a double-murder case. Riley has testified before Congress on the threats to and importance of local journalism. He's a regular on GPB's "Political Rewind."



**Alex Taylor** is chairman and CEO of Cox Enterprises. Since taking the helm in 2018, he has led the transformation of the company's core operating businesses in broadband, automotive services and media, while also strengthening employee-centric and customer-focused culture. The great-grandson of Ohio Gov. James M. Cox, who founded the company in 1898, Taylor is active in numerous civic organizations. He began his career as a reporter for the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel in Colorado.



# CAPLAN | COBB

Caplan Cobb proudly supports the **20th Charles L. Weltner Freedom of Information Celebration**.

We join in honoring the **Cox family** and **Jane Hansen** for their extraordinary commitment to pursuing open government and access to information.

[CAPLANCOBB.COM](https://CAPLANCOBB.COM)



THURSDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2022 | \$2.00 | AJC.COM

**Judge rejects returning guns to Jan. 6 defendant, A3**

# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

It's Worth Knowing What's Really Going On.

**CHILDREN IN CRISIS** PART 3 OF A SERIES  
How Georgia's mental health system is failing kids

## Psych facilities lack oversight

Without transparency, parents may never know that the hospital treating their child has had serious patient care issues.

**HELP IS OUT THERE**  
If you or someone you know is struggling in a crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org.

By Garin Thegardis  
garinthegardis@ajc.com

On its consumer website, a high-profile accrediting organization displays its "Gold Seal of Approval" next to the names of almost every Georgia psychiatric hospital that admits children or teens for crisis care. The Joint Commission, which accredits hospitals and other health care organizations, says on its website, "you're telling your staff, competitors, community and each and every patient that you're committed to patient safety."

Yet, some Georgia psychiatric hospitals that display the Joint Commission's seal have troubled histories with government regulators and law enforcement agencies. Their investigations have determined the hospitals failed to meet even basic patient protection standards, with some of the lapses involving "devotion to patient safety."

Some parents have been kept in the dark about the extent of the problems at the hospitals. In one case, a parent was told that their child was safe and well, only to find out later that the child had been hospitalized for several days in a psychiatric facility.

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# Honoring the Cox family's commitment to open government and local journalism

## Hansen recognized as an Open Government Hero

Change has been a constant in the more than eight decades since James M. Cox purchased *The Atlanta Journal*, expanding his media reach beyond Ohio roots.

"I wouldn't know of another property in America I would want outside of this one," the former Ohio governor wrote to a friend about his acquisition of *The Journal* in 1939, according to the *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. "The town is progressing more than any city in the South."

Cox's investment in Atlanta, which included WSB Radio, spurred decades of growth and innovation for what ultimately would become one of America's largest family-owned companies. In 1948, Cox's WSB-TV became the first station in the South to air a live commercial television broadcast. It took tremendous commitment; the cost of one television camera was said to be the same as the cost of putting an entire radio station on the air. In 1950, Cox bought *The Atlanta Constitution*, adding a morning daily to its news portfolio. The company expanded into other areas, becoming an early entrant into cable television and later diversifying its business to include the automotive, clean technology and health care sectors.

**As Cox grew, so did Atlanta. Indeed, Georgia's progress has been shaped by the news that Cox-employed reporters, editors, photo journalists, columnists and cartoonists have brought to the state's residents every day since 1939.**



## World wars, societal shifts, technological transformations and competitive battles only increased the family's commitment to delivering news that Georgians can trust and to advocating for the type of open government that enables newsgathering and underpins democracy.



That commitment is why the Georgia First Amendment Foundation is honoring the Cox family with our 2022 Charles L. Weltner Freedom of Information Award. The award is being accepted tonight by Cox Enterprises Chairman and Chief Executive Officer **Alex Taylor**, great-grandson of James M. Cox. Taylor will deliver the keynote speech.

**Jane Hansen**, a former *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* journalist and recently retired public information officer for the Supreme Court of Georgia, is being recognized as an Open Government Hero for her work supporting court access and her impactful investigative reporting.



**Hansen was among many Cox journalists whose reporting has benefited Georgians. At the AJC, her investigations into the deaths of children under state agency protection led to new laws designed to hold child welfare officials accountable and lift the veil of secrecy surrounding tragedies happening under their care.**

That AJC-led push for change continues to inform investigative reporting, support the public's right to know and serve as a model for the investigative and government-transparency reporting that the Cox family continues to support in its newsrooms.

Lawsuits funded by Cox have established legal precedents that ensure hospital accreditation reports are open to the public; prevent universities from hiring presidents without public review; provide taxpayers more insight into how officials are using their tax dollars to woo businesses; and make it harder to cover up the failings of institutions charged with protecting Georgia's most vulnerable citizens.

Cox continues to advocate for the public's right to know and freedom of the press through support of the annual Georgia Bar, Media & Judiciary Conference, the Atlanta Press Club and the Georgia News Lab for student investigative journalism. The company also is a supporter of the emerging Georgia News Collaborative, an organization of alternative and traditional news outlets seeking to sustain strong journalism in communities throughout the state.

Earlier this year, Cox purchased Axios, a national digital news outlet, with plans to expand its local coverage to more U.S. cities. Meanwhile, the family-owned company continues to invest in the evolution of its flagship news outlet, the AJC.

For 82 years, the Cox family's enthusiasm for trustworthy local journalism and the public's right to know has not wavered. The foundation is pleased to recognize and celebrate the family's positive impact on Georgia.



**Under the Cox family's ownership, WSB Radio and WSB-TV were early adopters of news-gathering innovations such as helicopters.**

WSB/c.1967

# Fighting for the public's right to know

Through award-winning newsgathering and reporting, persuasive editorial commentary and significant financial support, Cox Enterprises and the Cox family have played a vital role in expanding transparency in government. Employing strategic litigation where necessary, they have led the way in pushing for the protection and expansion of Georgia's open records and meeting laws and public access to court records and proceedings. Here are some highlights.

## 1975

Cox took a Fulton County case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court to first establish that journalists cannot be sued for invasion of privacy for accurately reporting information found in public court records. The case is now one of the foundations of First Amendment law.

## 1986

WSB-TV successfully challenged in the U.S. Court of Appeals a local sheriff's ongoing effort to thwart or impede the station in gathering and reporting news relating to rumors of the sheriff's use of inmate labor on his private property.

## 1988

The AJC successfully opposed a religious order's attempt to seal all records in a lawsuit accusing the church of misconduct. In a landmark ruling, the Georgia Supreme Court declared that "our system abhors star chamber proceedings with good reason." The Court held that like "a candle ... court records hidden under a bushel make scant contribution to their purpose" and may be shielded from public scrutiny only upon a showing of "clear necessity."

## 1990

The AJC successfully sued head coaches at public universities in Georgia, including UGA Athletic Director Vince Dooley, to force disclosure of hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments they personally received for shoe contracts and other endorsements.

## 1994

Cox provided seed money and other support for the newly formed Georgia First Amendment Foundation, helping to launch our organization as the only one in the state fully dedicated to protecting and expanding the public's right to know. Over the years, Cox has re-upped support to sustain the foundation's mission.

## 2005

The Metro Atlanta Chamber and Central Atlanta Progress sought to lure the NASCAR Hall of Fame and the 2009 Super Bowl to Atlanta — and claimed their city- and state-supported bids were not public. The AJC and Georgia's attorney general successfully sued for disclosure, establishing that public agencies cannot use private organizations to conceal the public's business.

## 2012

When the Georgia General Assembly rewrote the state's Sunshine Laws, Cox advocated for greater public access to government records and meetings. The improvements made our laws more comprehensive and more applicable to the modern day. For example, the revised laws detailed how to hold technology-enabled remote meetings that also would be accessible to the public; that proved hugely beneficial when governments across Georgia rapidly shifted to online meetings in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2018

When City of Atlanta officials attempted to hide public records, WSB and the AJC pushed back, paving the way for what became the state's first criminal prosecution for a violation of the Georgia Open Records Act. Cox devoted money from a related legal settlement to support open government training of government officials, journalists, lawyers and members of the public statewide.

**WEATHER FORECAST**

Increasing cloudiness and slightly warmer tonight with lowest near 50; Tuesday cloudy with probably light rain.

# The Atlanta Journal

FINAL HOME EDITION

VOL. LVII, NO. 298 Full Associated Press Service

ATLANTA, GA., MONDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 18, 1939

Second Class Post Office and entered as second-class matter at the post office at Atlanta, under Act of March 3, 1879

PRICE FIVE CENTS

## Good Faith to Readers Basic Policy of Journal, James M. Cox Declares

Formal Statement Pledges Paper's Fidelity to Service of State and Nation

In candor, let me assert at the outset that there is not a newspaper in this country, except The Atlanta Journal, that I would be interested in acquiring. Through many years it has held my interest and admiration as a rugged, honest voice of the South, with a tradition as honorable as that of any member of the American press. It is privileged to operate in a city noted for its culture and progressiveness, and in a state with the tranquil spirit born of a pure American citizenship. It is centered in an agricultural empire which could feed and clothe half the people of the United States. The setting is sufficient to fire the imagination of any man. To labor in such a field is an inspiring privilege.

In my first approach to the readers of this paper, let a very vital thing be understood. The purchase of The Journal is not a gamble or a speculation. It is a transaction in cash—cash, the product of my labors, savings and financial credit. My only investment associates are the members of my immediate family. My reason for this very personal reference is to make clear to all that The Journal will remain a free newspaper, above coercion by any interest.

James R. Gray Sr. handed The Journal to his family and to Major John S. Cohen and John A. Brice with clean hands. They have kept it clean. They hand it to me with clean hands. We feel and accept, in the fullest measure the responsibility which this implies.

My conception of the functions and duties of a newspaper can be simply stated: It should tell the truth as only intellectual honesty can discern the truth. It should do what is in conscience needful and right. To try by vague and pointless preaching and evasion to please everyone is bad faith. Persisted in, it pleases none and exposes a lack of character which the people will soon appraise.

In our civilization the interests of the classes are organized and guarded by their own skilled agents. The masses are not so protected. The press should never be



### From Our Founder

December 18, 1939

“We must be moved, therefore, by a resolute policy of good faith to our readers ... [and] shall play our part with a dignity, energy and persistence befitting the best traditions of the Fourth Estate.”

James M. Cox  
Founder

## Martial Law Declared for Highway Office

New Sensation Marks Bitter Row Over Board Chairmanship

Martial law was declared in effect for the State Highway Department and all its properties Monday, providing a new sensation in the bitter controversy between Governor Rivers and W. Linton Miller, ousted Highway Board chairman who twice has been forcibly ejected from his office.

Adjutant General John E. Stoddard immediately stationed National Guard troops at the entrance of the Highway Building and at the office of the board chairman.

Governor Rivers said Monday that the operation of martial law "does not affect the operation of the Highway Department itself, but is only to protect the department against such physical intrusion as occurred last week."

### Scope of Martial Law

The Governor said, "That is the sole scope of the martial law."

### He added:

"I want to make it plain that the State Highway Department itself is not under martial law but is functioning under the protection of martial law. . . ."

"We want to prevent trouble in which some people are liable to hurt themselves, and to eliminate confusion by unqualified orders."

## Five Inmates Perish in Fire At Gracewood

Two Hurt Critically As Old Barn Used As Dormitory Burns

AUGUSTA, Ga., Dec. 18.—(AP).

# 82 years of Pressing On.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution makes the hard work of real, local journalism possible.

Our journalists uncover the truth, protect the public's right to know, and document our region's moments, milestones and people.

We believe that, together, we provide an irreplaceable public service, one that keeps the free press active locally and helps build a better Metro Atlanta and Georgia for all.

Thank you for making our mission possible.

It's worth knowing what's really going on ▶

**PRESS ON** ▶

[ajc.com](http://ajc.com)

## The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

*The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is a Cox Enterprises Company.*



# Weltner Award honorees



**2022 The Cox Family**

**2019 P. Harris Hines**, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia (posthumous)

**2018 James Bodiford**, Cobb County Superior Court Senior Judge

**2017 Carter Center Global Access to Information Program**

**2016 Motion Picture Association of America**

**2015 Sam Olens**, Georgia Attorney General

**2014 Georgia Judicial Qualifications Commission**

**2013 Carol Hunstein**, Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia

**2012 John Lewis**, U.S. Representative

**2011 Vernon Keenan**, Director, Georgia Bureau of Investigation

**2010 Mike Luckovich**, Atlanta Journal-Constitution

**2009 Leah Ward Sears**, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia

**2008 Michael Bowers**, former Attorney General of Georgia, and Jim Houston, retired from the Columbus Ledger-Enquirer

**2007 Marvin H. Shoob**, Judge, U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia

**2006 Johnny Isakson**, U.S. Senator

**2005 Norman Fletcher**, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Georgia

**2004 Roy Barnes**, former Governor of Georgia

**2003 Thurbert Baker**, Georgia Attorney General

**2002 Eason Jordan**, CNN Chief News Executive and President of Newsgathering



**Department of Journalism**

*Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication*  
**UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA**

## Congratulations to tonight's honorees!

**We embrace your commitment to open government and freedom of the press as we prepare the next generation of journalists.**

[grady.uga.edu/academics/journalism](http://grady.uga.edu/academics/journalism)

## A Guide to Court Access in Georgia



The rights of Georgians to access court proceedings and records

Produced in cooperation with the First Amendment Clinic at the University of Georgia School of Law

First Edition, 2022

## New guide details public access to courts in Georgia

The Georgia First Amendment Foundation, in partnership with the First Amendment Clinic at the University of Georgia's School of Law, this year published a first-of-its-kind guide to accessing state and federal court records and proceedings in our state.

*A Guide to Court Access in Georgia*, referred to as the "Yellow Book," is organized by type of court and type of access. Using a digestible question-and-answer format, the structure allows users to quickly find the information they need.

"Our courts can be perplexing, especially to members of the public who don't interact with them regularly. What's more, each type of court in Georgia is governed by its own rules for public access. This book is a plain-language guide for how to gain access to those state and federal court proceedings and records," said **Kathy Brister**, president of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation's board of directors.



"I am delighted that First Amendment Clinic students had the opportunity to help create the Yellow Book," said Clinic Director **Clare Norins**, who also serves on GFAF's board. "Developing this type of resource syncs well with the clinic's mission to foster greater public awareness around First Amendment issues, including government access and transparency. Our hope is that the Yellow Book will help people better understand their right to observe the operations of our state's judicial systems."

In a foreword, Georgia Supreme Court Presiding Justice **Nels Peterson** describes the Yellow Book as "an important and helpful resource for the public and the media as we all work together to safeguard the rights to open courts."

The Yellow Book is available online, and printed copies may be ordered from GFAF. It is part of a series of color-coded guides to open government published by the foundation. See them all at [gfaf.org/resources](https://gfaf.org/resources).



>>> Transparency organizations from across the U.S. are urging the Uniform Law Commission to prioritize the public's right to know in proposals for redacting personal information in public records. The issues are detailed in a letter written by GFAF Legislative Chair **Sarah Brewerton-Palmer** and endorsed by transparency advocates across the U.S. [bit.ly/3QDEU96](https://bit.ly/3QDEU96)



>>> Troubling permit requirements. Interference with livelihoods. Expensive legal bills shouldered by taxpayers. Increased conflict between police and citizens. **Nora Benavidez**, GFAF's newest board member, described these as the would-be perils of proposed anti-protest legislation. Fortunately, Georgia legislators refused to turn this bad bill into law. [bit.ly/3SfuUm2](https://bit.ly/3SfuUm2)



>>> School and public libraries in Georgia already had local processes for challenges to materials selection. Yet lawmakers superseded them and imposed a one-size-fits-all approach counter to First Amendment principles. Board member **Richard T. Griffiths** articulated GFAF's concerns about the ensuing confusion, conflict and erosion of community-based solutions. [bit.ly/3OzOM1B](https://bit.ly/3OzOM1B)



# GEORGIA RECORDER

Photo by Stanley Dunlap of the Georgia Recorder

The Georgia Recorder is proud to support the important work of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation and salutes the 2022 honorees.

INTEGRITY. FAIRNESS. INDEPENDENCE.  
[GEORGIARECORDER.COM](http://GEORGIARECORDER.COM)



First Amendment Clinic  
*School of Law*  
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA


**We're proud to partner with GFAF to further government transparency, free speech and a free press in Georgia.**



@UGA1stAmClinic



## LexisNexis®



is proud to support the Georgia First Amendment Foundation and congratulates the Cox family and Jane Hansen.





# Opening Doors to Justice

Open government is a cornerstone of an open society—a society where voices can be heard, ideas debated, and where there is opportunity for exchange between government and the people.

Kilpatrick Townsend is proud to join the Georgia First Amendment Foundation in honoring the Cox family, this year's Charles L. Weltner Freedom of Information Award winner, and Jane Hansen, recipient of the Open Government Hero Award.

We applaud their commitment to the protection of journalism, open government, and freedom of information in Georgia. Their work has demonstrated the importance and power of First Amendment principles that are foundational to our democracy.