

16TH ANNUAL

NEW ENGLAND FIRST AMENDMENT AWARDS



Hon. William G. Young

U.S. District Court in Massachusetts

Stephen Hamblett

First Amendment Award

Damien Fisher

Michael Donoghue

Freedom of Information Award

Samson Cournane

Antonia Orfield Citizenship Award

Presented by the

New England First Amendment Coalition

September 18, 2026 | 5:30 p.m. | Hotel Commonwealth

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PROGRAM SCHEDULE

Reception **5:30**

Ceremony Begins **6:00**

Welcoming Remarks **6:35**

Justin Silverman | NEFAC Executive Director
Gregory V. Sullivan | NEFAC President

**Presentation of the
Antonia Orfield Citizenship Award** **7:10**

Introduction Michael Champa | 2016 Orfield Award Recipient

Acceptance Remarks Samson Cournane | Health Care
Transparency Advocate

**Presentation of the
Michael Donoghue Freedom of Information Award** **7:20**

Introduction Diane M. Foley | On Behalf of Her Late Son
and 2015 Donoghue Award Recipient James W. Foley

Acceptance Remarks Damien Fisher | New Hampshire Journalist

**Presentation of the
Stephen Hamblett First Amendment Award** **7:30**

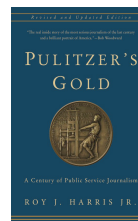
Introduction Hon. Nancy Gertner (Retired) | 2015 Hamblett
Award Recipient

Acceptance Remarks Hon. William G. Young | U.S. District
Court in Massachusetts

Closing Remarks **8:00**

Gregory V. Sullivan | NEFAC President

Dessert and Drinks (Outside Patio Weather Permitting) **8:10**



Congratulations to the

Hon. William G. Young

On His NEFAC First Amendment Award

--From Roy Harris & Columbia University Press, publisher of
Pulitzer's Gold: A Century of Public Service Journalism

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF COMMUNICATION

CONGRATULATES

the New England First Amendment Coalition's honorees for their work affirming the importance of building a society based upon the principles of open and transparent government.



Boston University College of Communication

The College of Communication has been educating professional communicators since 1914. Its students represent the next generation of leaders in journalism, emerging media, cinema, advertising, public relations, and media studies.

ABOUT STEPHEN HAMBLETT AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD

Stephen Hamblett's first newspaper job was as a summer reporter at his hometown paper, the Nashua Telegraph. It must have been a rewarding experience because soon after he graduated from Harvard, he signed on at The Providence Journal. That was in 1957, and Hamblett never looked back.

Hamblett rose from advertising department clerk to publisher in a career fueled by qualities for which he became famous — quick wit, dedication to excellence, warmth, good humor, passion for his community and a deep-seated belief in the wonder of newspapers.

During his leadership, The Providence Journal prospered financially and journalistically, the two most fundamental measures of a newspaper's success. The Journal's strong financial health drew the attention of the Belo Corporation, which acquired The Providence Journal Co. in 1997.

The publisher's job is a tightrope act, at once community booster and — via the newsroom — community watchdog. Hamblett walked that rope with skill and integrity for 12 years, from 1987 to 1999, never flinching at either responsibility.

Howard G. Sutton, who succeeded Hamblett in 1999, said, "Steve Hamblett ran The Providence Journal during an era of hectic change in the media business. He did so with vision, compassion, decisiveness, ingenuity, and calm, leading the firm around numerous economic shoals as it became

a truly national media company, all the while maintaining the Journal's long commitment to high-quality journalism and community improvement."

One of the many proofs of the newspaper's commitment to journalistic excellence came on Hamblett's watch in 1994 with the award of a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting on "pervasive corruption within the Rhode Island court system."

"The Journal newsroom held Steve in high regard," said Thomas E. Heslin, former executive editor of The Providence Journal. "He was widely respected as a great businessman, but he knew that good journalism is good business. The newsroom always knew it had his support."

A national figure as well as a local one, he served on the boards of the Associated Press, Inter-American Press Association and the Smithsonian Institution.

He was a single-minded and hard-working executive but left plenty of room for his family, friends, an occasional drink, a good cigar and a joke. His passing in December 2005 at age 71 generated obituaries from coast (the Los Angeles Times) to coast (The New York Times) and all points in between.

Hamblett's memory lives on in dozens of ways. Add to them The Stephen Hamblett First Amendment Award, which is given each year to an individual who has promoted, defended or advocated for the First Amendment throughout his or her career.



Hamblett

*"The liberty of the press
is essential to the
security of freedom."
John Adams.*

The Boston Globe

HAMBLETT FIRST AMENDMENT AWARD



— 2026 —

Hon. William G. Young

U.S. District Court in Massachusetts

2025 John King | CNN anchor and Chief National Correspondent who advocates for press freedom and transparency within journalism.

2024 Sarah-Ann Shaw (posthumously) | The trail-blazing journalist and community advocate mentored a generation of young reporters.

2023 Brian McGrory | A former reporter, columnist and editor at The Boston Globe, McGrory now serves as the chair of Boston University's journalism department.

2022 Raney Aronson-Rath | Aronson-Rath is the executive producer of FRONTLINE and an advocate for journalism and freedom of the press.

2021 Yamiche Alcindor | Alcindor is the former anchor and moderator of Washington Week on PBS and a correspondent for NBC News.

2020 A. G. Sulzberger | Sulzberger is publisher of The New York Times and the principal steward of the editorial independence and ambition of journalism at the newspaper.

2019 Stephen Engelberg | Founding managing editor of ProPublica from 2008-2012, Engelberg became editor-in-chief in 2013. He is a frequent lecturer on journalism and the need for government accountability.

2018 Jane Mayer | A writer for The New Yorker since 1995, Mayer is perhaps best known for her accountability journalism

and her ability to expose the underpinnings of powerful institutions.

2017 Margaret Sullivan | The former media columnist for The Washington Post and former public editor of The New York Times, Sullivan is a tireless advocate for the First Amendment and freedom of the press.

2016 Patrick Leahy | A U.S. senator from Vermont, Leahy is well-known for his work to strengthen the federal Freedom of Information Act and improve transparency within the court system.

2015 Hon. Nancy Gertner | Gertner is a retired federal judge and advocate for the First Amendment and increased transparency within the judicial system.

2014 James Risen | Risen is a Pulitzer Prize winning journalist, formerly of The New York Times, who faced legal peril for refusing to disclose a source.

2013 Philip Balboni | Balboni co-founded GlobalPost, which provides original international reporting. Earlier in his career, Balboni conceived and launched New England Cable News.

2012 Martin Baron | Baron served as executive editor of The Washington Post from 2012 to 2021. He was previously editor of The Boston Globe. Baron's newsrooms have won 17 Pulitzer Prizes under his leadership.

2011 Anthony Lewis | Lewis, who died in 2013, was a journalist, teacher and a long-time New York Times columnist.

Proud to invest in the future of
local journalism.

Jusolyn Flower | WPRI

Isabella Jibilian | Ocean State Media

Abdoulaye Kourouma | Rhode Island College

Emily Morgan | University of Rhode Island

Sarah Price | Roger Williams University

Elizabeth Turley | WPRI

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ABOUT MICHAEL DONOGHUE AND THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD

Michael Donoghue is an award-winning news and sports writer. He worked for more than 40 years at the Burlington Free Press and now is a freelancer.

He was selected as the 2013 New England Journalist of the Year by the New England Society of News Editors and in 2015 received the Matthew Lyon First Amendment Award. Donoghue has been an adjunct professor of journalism and mass communications at St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont, since 1985.

Donoghue has served as an officer, including executive director, with the Vermont Press Association since 1979. He is a former board member of the New England Press Association and has served continuously as state chairman of Project Sunshine in Vermont since it was started by the Society of Professional Journalists in 1990.

Donoghue is often credited as being a driving force behind the improvement to Vermont's open government

(public records and meetings) legislation. He has made his own successful legal arguments to judges about keeping courtrooms open and not sealing court documents.

Donoghue and the Free Press have been honored for his work on a local, state, regional and national level. Donoghue was selected in 2007 as the winner of the Yankee Quill Award, the top lifetime honor for print and electronic journalism in New England.

He has been inducted into five Halls of Fame, including as a charter member for the New England

Press Association's Hall of Fame and as a charter member for the Society of Professional Journalists/National Freedom of Information Coalition Hall of Fame. Donoghue is a former board member of the New England First Amendment Coalition.

The FOI Award is given each year to New England journalists who protect or advance the public's right to know under federal or state law.



Donoghue

NEFAC would like to recognize

*Paul and Ann Sagan
and The Robertson Foundation*

for their support of our coalition and the
New England First Amendment Awards.

Thank you for all you do.



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Photo credit: Gesi Schilling

Igniting in every
person the power
to shape thriving
communities.

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DONOGHUE FOI AWARD



— 2026 —

Damien Fisher

New Hampshire Journalist

2025 The Boston Globe | Produced “State Secrets,” a multi-part series that painted a troubling picture of the secretive Massachusetts Legislature.

2024 Maine Trust for Local News | The trust — which includes the Sun Journal, Portland Press Herald and Kennebec Journal — fought relentlessly for information about a mass shooting in Lewiston.

2023 Nancy West | West is founder of the New Hampshire Center for Public Interest Journalism and is executive editor of its website InDepthNH.org.

2022 Telegram & Gazette | The Worcester Telegram & Gazette prevailed in a three-year legal battle for the internal affairs records of officers working in its city police department.

2021 Bangor Daily News | The newspaper used public record laws to report on the misconduct of police and corrections officers in Maine through its “Lawmen Off Limits” series.

2020 Hearst Connecticut Media Group | A team of seven journalists spent more than six months investigating allegations of sexual abuse connected to Boys & Girls Clubs nationwide, finding more than 100 cases of abuse.

2019 Hartford Courant | The Courant successfully fought a legal battle at the state Supreme Court for information related to the 2012 shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

2018 Todd Wallack | As a reporter for The Boston Globe’s Spotlight Team, Wallack reported stories about online accessibility to criminal records and the overuse of public record law exemptions to keep information secret.

2017 Sun Journal | The Sun Journal of Lewiston, Maine, uncovered and successfully fought a state court policy that required all dismissed criminal cases to be sealed after 30 days in violation of the public records law.

2016 Jenifer McKim | A reporter for the New England Center for Investigative Reporting, McKim was recognized for her series “Out of the Shadows,” an investigation into child abuse.

2015 James W. Foley (posthumously) | A seasoned war correspondent, New Hampshire native Foley worked in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria, reporting on the lives of the disadvantaged and their suffering.

2014 Brent Curtis | A reporter for the Rutland (Vt.) Herald, Curtis fought for access to certain police records and helped make Vermont police departments more transparent.

2013 Don Stacom | Stacom, of the Hartford Courant, pursued stories about police misconduct through the Connecticut Freedom of Information Commission, prompting a shakeup of the New Britain, Conn., police department.

Congress of the United States,

We would like to acknowledge

**MORGAN LEWIS
and THE DAY**

for their generosity and support
of the First Amendment and the public's
right to know throughout New England.

Your support makes us a stronger
organization and will help us honor
First Amendment heroes across the region
for years to come.

Thank you.

nefac

New England
First Amendment Coalition

ABOUT ANTONIA ORFIELD AND THE CITIZENSHIP AWARD

The Antonia Orfield Citizenship Award is given to an individual from one of the six New England states who has fought for information crucial to the public's understanding of its community or what its government is doing (or not doing) on its behalf. The candidate should have shown tenacity or bravery in the face of difficulty in obtaining information that the public has a right to know.

Orfield was an author, mother, optometrist, clinical professor and active citizen. She worked to improve the schools in the communities she lived in, serving on one of the first elected local school councils in Chicago. She



Orfield

also sought to advance her profession and improve the lives of her patients through the use and teaching of therapeutic non-surgical methods of vision

therapy. As a researcher, she knew the importance of access to data to analyze, draw conclusions and challenge existing assumptions of screening and treatment protocols. Dr. Orfield operated a vision clinic in Mather Elementary School in Dorchester, Mass., which documented the improvement of children's grades and test scores with unconventional vision-related remedies to learning problems. The findings were published in several articles and in "Eyes for Learning," her 2007 book.



The New England First Amendment Coalition provides a free mentorship program for journalists working in the region. Reporters, editors and producers looking for guidance in a variety of professional areas can apply to be paired with a veteran journalist with relevant expertise.

Learn more at
nefac.org/mentors

ORFIELD CITIZENSHIP AWARD



— 2026 —

Samson Cournane
Health Care Transparency Advocate

2025 Laurie Ortolano | The Nashua (N.H.) resident fought for information about how those in city government are making decisions on behalf of constituents.

2024 Daniel Dunn | As a member of the Police Oversight Commission in Hamden, Conn., Dunn increased public access to records that documented police activity.

2023 Susan Hawes | Hawes engaged in a protracted battle for information about the Cumberland County (Maine) Jail and its employment practices.

2022 Tara Gunnigle | Gunnigle used the New Hampshire Right to Know Law to investigate the illegal sale of a property to an acting town official.

2021 Jeanne Kempthorne | Kempthorne resigned in protest from her position as general counsel to the Berkshire County district attorney after being ordered not to release public records that were clearly public.

2020 Cook v. Raimondo Student Activists | The Providence public school students filed a federal lawsuit against Rhode Island officials arguing that the state is failing to provide the civics education they need to be engaged citizens.

2019 David Saad | Saad and several other citizens formed Right to Know NH as a citizen coalition working to improve

transparency in New Hampshire government.

2018 Hyde Square Task Force | The community center used the Mass. public records law to uncover a state mandate that required the owners of the TD Garden to pay millions to Boston recreational facilities.

2017 Donna Green | Green successfully fought for the right to electronic records under the N.H. Right to Know Law, prevailing in the state's highest court.

2016 Michael A. Champa | By prevailing in a public records case heard by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, Champa uncovered systemic failures and inequities in the state's special education services.

2015 Harriet Cady | A long-time open government activist whose advocacy led to several Right to Know lawsuits, Cady helped create the watchdog group Right to Know NH.

2014 Kit Savage | Savage's investigation uncovered violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which formed the basis of a complaint to the Connecticut Dept. of Education.

2013 David Lang | After a nine-year crusade, Lang exposed the mismanagement of health insurance premiums, resulting in a court order to refund \$53 million to public employees.

Transparency starts here.

**Have a question about
open government laws
in your state?**

Check out our multimedia FOI Guide at:
nefac.org/foiguide



Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of **religion**, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of **speech**, or of the **press**; or the right of the people peaceably to **assemble**, and to **petition** the government for a redress of grievances.

U.S. Constitution, First Amendment

Support our work at nefac.org/donations

The New England First Amendment Coalition defends, promotes and expands freedom of information and public access to the government and the work it does. NEFAC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Learn more about NEFAC at nefac.org.

Tax-exempt contributions can also be sent to NEFAC, 111 Milk Street, Westborough, MA 01581.