**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - MARCH 6, 2007**

**Contact:** [**MnCOGI**](http://www.mncogi.org/) **or** [**mtreacy@onvoymail.com**](mailto:mtreacy@onvoymail.com)

**GARY HILL HONORED WITH JOHN R. FINNEGAN FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AWARD**

**Minnesotans struggling to gather public information collected by the state no longer encounter such intrusive questions as “Who wants to know?” or “Why do you want to know?” They have Gary Hill to thank. In the late 1990’s Hill led efforts to eliminate these and other barriers to open records. Over the past decades Hill has worked at the state and national levels to support a Shield law, to expand the use of cameras and recording devices in the courts, and to advocate at every turn for open government.**

**When Gary Hill received word that he was named recipient of the 2007 John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award, his response was self-effacing: "To have my name associated with Jack Finnegan is truly an honor." As fellow journalists, Finnegan and Hill share a commitment to openness in government, to mentoring socially responsible journalists, and to ethics in the profession.**

**The Freedom of Information Award, established by the** [**Minnesota Coalition on Government Information (MnCOGI**](http://www.mncogi.org/)**) in 1989, is named for** [**John R. Finnegan Sr,**](http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/biography.aspx?name=finnegan) **retired senior vice president and assistant publisher of the *St* *Paul Pioneer Press.* Finnegan is founder and stalwart of the Minnesota Joint Media Committee which continues to support open records, open meetings and other First Amendment-related causes in the Legislature and other public arenas in Minnesota.**

**Nominated by the Minnesota Professional Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Gary Hill has been a leader of that organization “for more years than anyone can remember.” Until recently Hill was a journalist with KSTP-TV. In January 2007 he moved to a new position as Communications Director for the Majority Caucus of the Minnesota Senate.**

**The Board of the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information also recognizes a select number of outstanding nominees for the annual award:**

* **The City of Chanhassen, nominated for its enhanced** [**website**](http://www.ci.chanhassen.mn.us/inside/index.html) **which provides in-depth access to city government documents for residents, businesses and other governments.**
* **Red Wing residents Patricia and Roger Sween are recognized as crusaders for intellectual freedom and against censorship. As leaders of the** [**Minnesota Coalition for Intellectual Freedom**](http://www.memoweb.org)**, the Sweens focused on advocacy and education through support for First Amendment rights when challenged, presentations to officials and groups, and the development of model policies and position papers.**
* **The** [**Twin Cities Daily Planet**](http://www.tcdailyplanet.net)**, a program of Twin Cities Media Alliance, is an online news service that offers access to news and government information sources not covered by major local media while providing an outlet for citizen journalists.**

**The John R. Finnegan Freedom of Information Award will be presented on Friday, March 16, at 12:00 Noon at the Minneapolis Public Library. March 16 is celebrated nationally as** [**Freedom of Information Day**](http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/press/information/topic.aspx?topic=FOI_Day)**; the date is the birth date of James Madison, defender of an informed citizenry supported by an open government. The event is free and open to the public.**

**In 2005 the Minnesota Coalition on Government Information was recognized nationally with the Eileen Cooke State and Local Information Madison Award, named for the long-time government information advocate, and Minnesota native, who led lobbying efforts of the American Library Association for 25 years.**

**# # #**