

Sunshine Week shines light on need for transparency

*From the halls of Congress to the desks of local government officials,
too many power brokers work hard to keep us in the dark*

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Now, more than ever, you need to know.

You not only need to know about the chaos in Washington, but you need to know what's happening in your own backyard in state, county, and local governments closer to home, too.

That's why this year's Sunshine Week, March 16-22, is so important. It reminds us of the need to ensure full transparency in government at all levels. We need a strong news media to pull back the curtains and shine a spotlight on every nook and cranny in government, from the Oval Office to the local school board.

Records of older adults who die as a result of suspected abuse or neglect revealed [how government is failing our elderly](#). An investigation into the assassination attempt of [then-candidate Donald Trump's campaign rally](#) in Butler last summer revealed what has been called the largest security failure in 40 years.

[Prisons throughout the commonwealth](#) haven't provided an accurate count on the number of people who died inside their walls, many under questionable circumstances. There are officials who wanted to keep that information secret. Reporters had to navigate what they described as "a patchwork of inconsistent systems of records" that often led to dead ends. Their persistence led to Pennsylvania's first [database of in-custody deaths](#).

None of these stories would have seen the light of day without dogged reporters supported by strong transparency laws.

In Pennsylvania, the Right-to-Know Law and Sunshine Act are supposed to ensure access to information from a host of state and local agencies. But that can be easier said than done. Journalists often have to fight to get information. And there are forces that work to weaken laws providing public access to the nooks and crannies of government operations.

From the halls of Congress to the desks of local government officials, too many power brokers work hard to keep us in the dark.

That's why we must protect Pennsylvania's Right-to-Know Law and Sunshine Act to give journalists the tools they need to uncover government malfeasance and hold public officials accountable. Without strong transparency laws and journalists' perseverance, we, the people, might never know.