

SUNSHINE WEEK

March 12–18, 2023

EDITORIAL FACT SHEET

Sunshine Week shines a light on open government and access to public information. The observance was launched in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors, now the News Leaders Association. This year Sunshine Week is celebrated March 12–18.

A highlight of the weeklong observance is national Freedom of Information Day, which is March 16, the birthday of President James Madison. Viewed as the father of the U.S. Constitution, America's fourth commander in chief is also regarded as an early advocate for open government.

Sunshine Week gives Pennsylvania newspapers an opportunity to underscore the importance of government accountability, accessibility and transparency as key to a healthy democracy. News articles, editorials, op-eds, cartoons, podcasts, videos and events are ways to make that happen.

In Pennsylvania:

- The Sunshine Act guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in all government agency meetings where official business is discussed or acted upon.
- The Right-to-Know Law presumes records in the possession of government agencies are public and must be provided within the framework of the law.
- The state [Office of Open Records](#), created by the RTKL, has binding authority over citizen access to public records. The office issues annual reports on the state of open records in Pennsylvania government, provides training on the RTKL and Sunshine Act, monitors RTKL cases within the state court system, and answers citizen and media questions about transparency laws.

The reach of Pennsylvania newspapers:

- 7 in 10 Pennsylvania adults read a print or digital newspaper or visited a newspaper website in the past week¹, making these publications essential vehicles for promoting and ensuring open government.

For more information about Sunshine Week visit:

- [Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association](https://panewsmedia.org/legal-and-legislative/sunshine-week/)
<https://panewsmedia.org/legal-and-legislative/sunshine-week/>
- [News Leaders Association](https://www.newsleaders.org/sunshine-week-about)
<https://www.newsleaders.org/sunshine-week-about>
- [Society of Professional Journalists](https://www.spj.org/sunshineweek.asp)
<https://www.spj.org/sunshineweek.asp>

A statewide survey conducted in August 2022 by Public Opinion Strategies for PNA found:

- 92% of Pennsylvania registered voters overwhelmingly favor state law requiring public notices to be published in print editions of local newspapers to alert citizens about important local issues – like zoning changes, school closures, and environmental proposals that impact health and property – before government takes action.
- 92% of Pennsylvania registered voters favor expanding the Right-to-Know Law, which provides citizens access to public records held by government agencies.
- 85% of Pennsylvania registered voters said they have the most trust in local newspapers, print and online; that level of trust surpasses other news media outlets.
- 87% of the state's registered voters said that local newspapers are key to an informed community because they cover local issues such as business, politics and public safety.

