



First Amendment FOUNDATION

Protecting Your Right to Know Since 1985

First Amendment Foundation President Barbara Petersen To Retire

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TALLAHASSEE – After 25 years of serving as President of Florida’s First Amendment Foundation (FAF), Barbara Petersen has announced her plans to retire at the end of this year.

Before joining FAF, she was staff attorney for the Joint Committee on Information Technology of the Florida Legislature, where she worked exclusively on public records legislation and issues. During her years at FAF, Petersen has also served as chair of Florida’s Commission on Open Government Reform and on Governor Jeb Bush’s Task Force on Privacy and Technology. Petersen has received many awards during her span as President, including the prestigious American Library Association’s 2018 Eileen Cooke Award honoring those who champion access to government information and the public’s right to know.

Petersen served as president of the board of directors of the National Freedom of Information Coalition and currently serves on its board, as well as the boards of the Florida Society of News Editors and the Florida Center for Investigative Reporting. A passionate advocate of the public’s right to oversee its government, during her tenure at FAF she has provided open government training to thousands of government officials, public employees, citizen organizations, and reporters across Florida.

Under Petersen’s leadership, the First Amendment Foundation worked with Governor Charlie Crist in the creation of the Office of Open Government in the Executive Office of the Governor and has written dozens of friend of the court briefs supporting citizens and the media, including two cases before the United States Supreme Court.

Petersen intends to stay involved in FAF and like causes in retirement. Petersen’s replacement will be announced sometime this fall as will details of her retirement celebration.

In announcing her retirement, Petersen said:

“Twenty-five years ago, when the visionary *Miami Herald* managing editor Pete Weitzel asked me to run the First Amendment Foundation, I knew then I would be able to spend my legal career pursuing a passion that I find essential to the health and sustainability of democracy in Florida. The FAF is the only organization in Florida that focuses its energy and resources on protecting the public’s right to oversee its government and hold it accountable to the electorate. Of course, that effort requires the

vigilance of hundreds of people across the state — reporters, editors, citizens, public officials and government employees — who make sure our system of governance remains open and accessible to its people. It's been an honor to serve as the president of the First Amendment Foundation over the years, and a privilege to work with so many people devoted to government in the sunshine, there for all to see and participate in, a standard we all must be willing to fight for in the future, as so many have fought so steadfastly for in the past. I thank everyone who shares this ideal for their support of the Foundation as it continues to work on behalf of all Floridians.”

Lucy Morgan, the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter for the St. Petersburg Times (now the Tampa Bay Times) and namesake of FAF's "Lucy Morgan Award for Open Government Reporting," said of Petersen's retirement, "Barbara is an irreplaceable asset to Floridians. She has fought hard to keep doors and public records open to reporters and Florida citizens seeking help. She will be missed by all."

Pete Weitzel, FAF's co-founder, stated, "Barbara has been a vigorous voice for openness in local and state government. She has built the First Amendment Foundation into an effective advocate for transparency, providing an important check on proposed legislation and on local and state government actions that shaded the actions of government. And she has provided Sunshine Law training to both officials and citizens throughout Florida. An important job superbly done."

Jim Baltzelle, FAF's Chairman of the Board and the Director Local Media, Southeast for the Associated Press, said of Petersen's tenure, "Barbara Petersen is a fierce advocate for all Floridians on open access to government meetings and public records. Her tireless work as president of the First Amendment Foundation has set the framework for so many battles to come."

FAF's Board of Directors has appointed a search committee to find Petersen's replacement. More information about that search will be available in the weeks ahead on FAF's website, www.floridafaf.org.

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About the First Amendment Foundation

The First Amendment Foundation continues to be a highly visible and accessible source of authoritative information, expertise and assistance to the public and news media. Founded as a non-profit organization in 1984 by The Florida Press Association, the Florida Society of Newspapers Editors and the Florida Association of Broadcasters to ensure that public commitment and progress in the areas of free speech, free press, and open government do not become checked and diluted during Florida's changing times.

Please join us to help expand our efforts ensuring open government in the Sunshine State by reinforcing the intrinsic value of access to public records and meetings by giving [here](#) today.