

Lawyers conference on FOIA planned

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The ACLU Foundation and the Freedom of Information Clearinghouse are cosponsoring a conference on "Litigation Under the Amended Federal Freedom of Information Act" on April 26 and 27 at Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. The one-day program will be the same on each day.

The amended FOIA has significantly narrowed the exemptions the government can claim to refuse disclosure. Strict statutory time limits, chargeable fees and judicial review have given the law new usefulness. Furthermore, to make litigation an affordable option for a wide range of clients, the Act provides that in cases where the plaintiff "substantially prevails" the agency may now be assessed court costs and attorney's fees.

With these and other changes, the public now has an enforceable right to government reports, regulations, policy decisions and documents dealing with the endless ways that the federal government influences the public. The FOIA is of great potential value to clients as diverse as business, labor, journalists, scholars, environmentalists, consumer groups, and individuals seeking the files the government has kept on them.

Conference participants will get a paperback handbook, approximately 150 pages in length, containing detailed outlines of all conference lectures as well as source materials for the FOIA, the Privacy Act, and the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Materials will also be available on the California Public Records Act. Conference speakers will be Morton H. Halperin and John H.F. Shattuck of the ACLU, and Larry Ellsworth and Mark Lynch of the FOI Clearinghouse.

Halperin is a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense and senior staff member of the National Security Council. He is currently Director of the National Security and Civil Liberties Project. Shattuck is National Staff Counsel for ACLU and has wide experience in FOIA litigation including the suits for the Hiss and Rosenberg documents. He also handled

the Marchetti case contesting CIA censorship of the book *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, and the Nixon papers litigation.

Ellsworth has litigated more FOIA cases than any attorney presently in practice. Lynch is a former lobbyist for Ralph Nader's Congress Watch who was instrumental in the passage of the FOIA amendments and who has litigated a wide range of FOIA cases.

The FOIA Litigation Conference will follow the general format of PLI and ELI/ABA conferences and will focus on the specific interests of practicing attorneys. The pre-registration fee is \$100 per person, \$125 at the door. A special rate of \$20 per person is available to law students, law school faculty, and people representing C-3 and C-4 tax exempt organizations. For registration, contact Deborah Boyce at ACLU, 814 Mission Street, San Francisco, 94103 (415) 777-4880.