

But reluctant federal agencies found ways to get around the 1966 law by delaying responses to requests for information, by charging people high fees to obtain the information and by broadly interpreting the exemptions.

In 1974, Congress passed amendments to the Freedom of Information Act which made the law stronger by imposing response deadlines, providing for waiver of fees for information used in the public interest and by narrower definitions of the exemptions.

In 1975, the General Assembly of Connecticut passed a Freedom of Information Act which is similar to the federal act. The state law permits people to obtain information collected by agencies of the state and local governments and also requires these agencies to make and maintain records of their activities.

Making a request is as easy as writing a letter. The process is explained in a pamphlet from the Know Your Government series, reprinted here in the Winsted Voice, and available at no charge at the Office of the Community Lawyer.

March 16th is the anniversary of James Madison's birthday and it is celebrated as Freedom of Information Day. This year, The Shafcock Nader Trust for the Community Interest is sponsoring the third annual Civic Freedom of Information Day Award. Students at The Gilbert School participated in a presentation of information by the Community Lawyer about Freedom of Information laws and wrote about the importance of access to information in a democracy. The three best responses receive prizes.

This year we will celebrate Freedom of Information Day on March 16, 1994 in a