

Column

e. Community Lawyer

ceremony at Northwestern Connecticut Community College. Richard Blumenthal, the Attorney General for the State of Connecticut, will be the keynote speaker and the winners of the Freedom of Information contest will receive their award.

Ralph Nader, a graduate of The Gilbert School, says that "information is the currency of democracy." For this reason he was instrumental in the passage of the Freedom of Information laws. People, armed with information about their government, are involved and effective citizens.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The state of Connecticut requires that the public have access to most government documents and records. Any member of the public can inspect most public records, and can get a copy just by making a written request. The person does not have to give the reason or follow a special format, but the documents have to be described enough so that the employee or agency can locate them.

A fee can be charged of up to fifty cents per page. If obtaining a copy requires that a transcription or printout be made, the fee cannot be more than the cost to the agency of making the transcription or printout. Fees can be waived if the agency determines that the disclosure will benefit the general welfare, so it may be worth giving the reason for the request if that would help in getting a waiver of the fee. If certified copies are needed, the fee can be up to a dollar for the first page and fifty cents for each additional page. Payments in advance may be required if the fee is estimated to be more than ten dollars, but no sales tax may be charged.