

FACT SHEET

HONOLULU COMMUNITY-MEDIA COUNCIL

CONTACT

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ORGANIZATION

Established in 1970, the Honolulu Community-Media Council is the oldest of the nation's three volunteer media councils. Membership is open to anyone who subscribes to the Council's mission. It is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c) (3) organization.

MISSION

The Honolulu Community-Media Council—composed of individuals from the media and the community—is a nonpartisan, non-governmental independent group. It seeks to promote accurate and fair journalism in Hawaii, broaden public understanding of the role of the media, foster discussion of media issues, strengthen public support for First Amendment rights and freedoms, and improve public access to information.

MEMBERSHIP

The membership elects a Chair, Chair-Elect, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer to serve as Council officers.

Members are encouraged to volunteer for a standing committee. The exception is the Hearings Committee, whose members are elected. The committees are:

- **Program Committee:** Develops luncheon programs, special forums or meetings to explore issues of interest to the Council, and the Freedom of Information Day program.
- **Fundraising Committee:** Raises funds through gifts, grants and other appropriate means to support Council programs and activities.
- **Publicity and Newsletter Committee:** Publicizes the Council's concerns and activities, prepares and distributes the Council's newsletters, and develops, monitors and updates the Council's web site.
- **Government Watch Committee:** Monitors federal, state or local legislation and regulation that affect press freedom, information practices and other issues of concern.
- **Membership Committee:** Promotes membership in the Council.
- **Complaint Committee:** Investigates complaints submitted to the Council.
- **Hearing Committee:** Conducts hearings on and decides the outcome of complaints. Committee members are elected at a regular or special Council meeting. The committee shall be composed of not less than seven nor more than nine Council members. No more than half of the committee members shall be active members of the news media.

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Council's primary function is to receive and address people's complaints of unfair treatment by the media. The Council also addresses the media's complaints against public officials for their handling of public information.

Cases include:

- **Mayor Fasi vs. the press, 1978:** At the federal judge's suggestion, the Council developed press conference guidelines, which the judge incorporated in his declamatory judgment that Mayor Frank Fasi's exclusion of newspaper reporters from his news conference violated the First and Fourteenth Amendments.
- **Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate vs. Honolulu Star-Bulletin, 1988:** At the request of Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate, the Council reviewed 13 complaints involving a series of *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* articles. The council found three complaints were justified, five were valid in part, and five were not proved.
- **Prosecutor Kaneshiro vs. KGMB-TV, 1991:** City Prosecutor Keith Kaneshiro complained a KGMB-TV reporter engaged in unethical and unprofessional behavior in covering a criminal case. A Council committee investigated and found no unethical or unprofessional behavior. When the committee's report was presented to the Council, Kaneshiro and KGMB-TV news director Terry Heaton personally argued their positions. The Council adopted the committee's report with minor changes.
- **Alex Santiago vs. North Shore News, 1995:** State Representative Alex Santiago complained the bi-weekly *North Shore News* distorted his views on same-sex marriage and a housing project, and incorrectly reported his talk to the neighborhood board. The Council investigated and found in Santiago's favor on two of the three complaints. The newspaper publisher refused to meet with the Council's committee.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION DAY

Freedom of Information Day is celebrated nationally on the anniversary of President James Madison's birth, March 16. Madison was the chief author of the Bill of Rights. It also spotlights America's Freedom of Information Act of 1966, which established the right of citizens to obtain information from federal agencies. In Hawaii, the Council annually celebrates Freedom of Information Day by sponsoring a lunch or dinner with a keynote speaker.

FLETCHER KNEBEL AWARD FOR JOURNALISM EXCELLENCE

As part of Freedom of Information Day, the Council bestows the "Fletcher Knebel Award for Journalism Excellence" on an outstanding member of the media. The award is named after journalist and author Fletcher Knebel, who lived in Hawaii before his death in 1993. In the 1950s, Knebel was a political correspondent in Washington, D.C., for Cowles Publications, which owned *Look* magazine. He later wrote outstanding fiction, including "Seven Days in May" and "Night of Camp David."