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University of Montana–Missoula. Office of University Relations, "Freedom of information conference coming to UM" (1999). *University of Montana News Releases, 1928, 1956-present*. 15913.
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The University of
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NEWS RELEASE

This release is available electronically on INN (News Net.)

March 26, 1999

Contact: UM School of Journalism, (406) 243-4001.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CONFERENCE COMING TO UM MISSOULA-

The 1999 Montana Freedom of Information Conference will be held Saturday, April 17, at The University of Montana. The conference will start at 9 a.m. in the Castles Center of the School of Law. The \$12 registration fee will include lunch. Tonda Rush, former executive director of the National Newspaper Association and a nationally recognized expert on freedom of information, will be the keynote speaker during the lunch.

A highlight of the conference will be the presentation of the Montana Free Press Award, which was established in 1994.

The conference is sponsored by the law school, the School of Journalism, the Montana Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists and the Montana Freedom of Information Hotline.

The FOI conference will include three panel discussions:

"Confidential Settlements" – Increasingly, court cases of significant public interest are settled out-of-court, with the details sealed. Some cases are removed entirely from court records. This panel will look at trends across the country, including alternative dispute resolution, and what the trends mean for public access to court information. The discussion's

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moderator will be Clem Work of the School of Journalism. Panelist will be James Regnier, Montana Supreme Court justice; Bill Rossbach of Trial Lawyers for Public Justice; Larry Riley of Garlington, Lohn and Robinson; and Nick Ehli, Billings Gazette courts reporter.

“Access to Electronic Government Records” – This has been a hot issue in recent months, even in Montana. What is the status of electronic records in the state? How does Montana compare to other states? And what challenges do state information managers face when reporters or citizens ask for large volumes of records in specific form? Ian Marquand with KPAX-TV will moderate the discussion. Panelists will be Dennis Swibold, journalism professor; Katja Stromnes, journalism master’s degree candidate at UM; Jon Sesso with the Butte-Silver Bow Planning Department; and John Kuglin, Associated Press bureau chief.

“Political Speech” – What happens when public policy designed to insure fairness and access in political campaigns clashes with constitutional guarantees of free speech? UM law Adjunct Assistant Professor Jeff Renz will moderate this discussion. Panelists will be John Motl with Reynolds, Motl of Helena and Beth Brenneman with the Montana ACLU. Two other panelists will be announced.

For more information, contact Clem Work at (406) 243-2160, Dennis Swibold at (406) 243-2230 or Ian Marquand at (406) 542-4449.

The FOI Conference will be followed that same day by the Dean Stone Lecture at 7:30 p.m. in the University Theatre. NBC Nightly News anchor Tom Brokaw will be the featured speaker. Call 1-888-666-8262 to purchase \$8 tickets for that event.

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