



Iowa Newspaper Association Bulletin

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Iowa out of step on access to police video

RANDY EVANS

IOWA FREEDOM OF INFORMATION COUNCIL

Every few months, someone is killed or injured by police somewhere in the United States under circumstances that lead to inevitable questions about what exactly occurred.

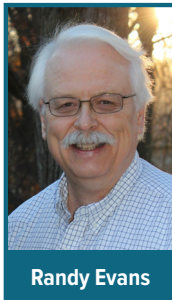
Typically, answers come when video from the law officers' squad car cameras or their uniform cameras is made public. Each time this occurs, there are two inescapable conclusions:

First, police in most states realize it is their obligation to release this video. They know that public faith and respect for law officers will suffer if citizens and journalists are prevented from viewing the footage, especially when an incident results in death or injury, most notably when the person was not armed.

And second, each time such video is released somewhere in the United States, it becomes obvious Iowa is out of step with most other states — because in Iowa, law enforcement agencies and government attorneys insist the video must forever remain off-limits because it is part of a confidential investigative file.

This insistence on secrecy harms public trust and respect for Iowa law enforcement.

The Iowa Legislature has been asked repeatedly in the past half-dozen years to address this lack



Randy Evans

of transparency in a thoughtful, measured way — balancing legitimate concerns for police investigations that are still under way with the need for public transparency and accountability.

But lawmakers have steadfastly refused to debate such proposals. Instead, issues of transparency and accountability have fallen victim to pressure to “back the blue.”

Julie Pottorff, the chair of the Iowa Public Information Board, spoke out on this issue earlier this month during an IPIB meeting. Pottorff is an attorney. Before retiring a decade ago, she spent 35 years in government service, concluding her career as Iowa's deputy attorney general.

Like many Americans, Pottorff was deeply shaken by the videos of the savage beating a half-dozen police officers inflicted on an unarmed Tyre Nichols on Jan. 7 in Memphis, Tenn. The fatal beating was recorded on officers' body cameras and on area surveillance cameras.

Pottorff told her fellow board members there were serious factual discrepancies between what the officers claimed in their written reports about the Nichols incident and what the videos showed occurred.

Likewise, Pottorff said, Chicago police officers' reports about a 2014 altercation that ended with Laquan McDonald being fatally shot 16 times were contradicted a year later when the video from the incident finally was made public.

“The video really tells the story that the reports do not,” Pottorff said of Nichols' beating. “It was so

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Don't Miss Friday's Legislative Session Q&A

This Friday at 10:00 a.m. INA executive director, Susan Patterson Plank, will be hosting a Legislative session Q&A. This session is intended for publishers, editors and general managers. If you did not receive the Zoom link and wish to participate, please contact ina@inanews.com.

CALENDAR of EVENTS

MEETINGS

INA, INF, INA Services
Company Board Meetings
April 21, 2023

WEBINARS

6 Sales Tactics You Need
To Do In 2023
March 30, 2023



MARCH 12-18, 2023

Celebrate Sunshine Week

Sunshine Week was launched in 2005 by the American Society of News Editors — now News Leaders Association — and has grown into an enduring initiative to promote open government.

The News Leaders Association has partnered with The Society of Professional Journalists to host the annual nationwide celebration of access to public information and what it means for you and your community. It's your right to know.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED:

- Share your stories: Please share your experiences, success stories, FOIA battles, new laws and other efforts on behalf of open government. Tweet to us @SunshineWeek or use #SunshineWeek to share.
- If your organization is holding an event to highlight this year's Sunshine Week, and you would like to have it considered for submission on our events calendar, fill out the event form here.
- News Organizations: If you would like to submit stories, editorials, columns, cartoons or graphics for public use during Sunshine week, email your content links to contact@sunshineweek.org. Please include a brief description and/or headlines suitable for posting on our Sunshine Week web page.
- If you are in the world of journalism, you can highlight the importance of openness through stories, editorials, columns, cartoons or graphics.
- If you are part of a civic group, you can organize local forums, sponsor essay contests or press elected officials to pass proclamations on the importance of open access.
- If you are an educator, you can use Sunshine Week to teach your students about how government transparency improves our lives and makes our communities stronger.
- If you are an elected official, you can pass a resolution supporting openness, introduce legislation improving public access or encourage training of government employees to ensure compliance with existing laws mandating open records and meetings.
- If you are a private citizen, you can write a letter to the editor or spread the word to friends through social media.

Visit <https://www.newsleaders.org/sw23-social-media-kit> to access the media kit.

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The Iowa Public Information Board Celebrates Sunshine Week in Iowa

The Iowa Public Information Board will highlight Sunshine Week in Iowa at their monthly Board meeting on Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

Sunshine Week is a nationwide event to educate the public about the importance of open government and transparency. It coincides each year with James Madison’s birthday and National Freedom of Information Day. Sunshine Week is a celebration of access to information and what it means for communities and citizens in our state and across the country. It provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of access to information as a cornerstone of democracy.

The Iowa Public Information Board was created in 2012 to provide a free, efficient way for Iowans to receive information and resolve complaints related to Iowa’s open meetings and public records laws. It promotes and educates Iowans about transparency within our government.

The IPIB works with Iowa’s governmental bodies, the media, and the citizenry at large. The vast majority of complaints are settled informally, with a negotiated compromise that satisfies both parties, reduces community conflict, and results in increased government transparency.

For more information about the IPIB, please visit: www.ipib.iowa.gov. Opinions, rulings, FAQs, monthly columns, and training documents are also available on the IPIB website. Questions for the IPIB can be posted on the website or by calling 515-725-1781.

Interested in applying for the vacancy on the IPIB? Please apply online at <https://talentbank.iowa.gov/board-detail/e821f1ad-cda1-48b8-8ebc-41075bf86318>.

DID YOU KNOW that the Iowa Public Information Board staff is available to assist you with questions or problems involving open meetings and public records in Iowa? During the month of February 2023, 85 contacts were made with the Iowa Public Information Board office.

WHO CAN CONTACT THE IPIB AND HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE? Any person can contact the IPIB for assistance by telephone (515-725-1781), by email, or on the IPIB website. In 2023, 163 identifiable people have contacted the IPIB. Of these, 104 were private citizens, 47 were government officials or employees, and 12 were members of the media. In 2023, 70% of the incoming contacts were resolved the first day, 15% were resolved in one to five days, and 15% were resolved in six or more days. Opinions, rulings, FAQs, reports, and training documents are available on the IPIB website – www.ipib.iowa.gov.

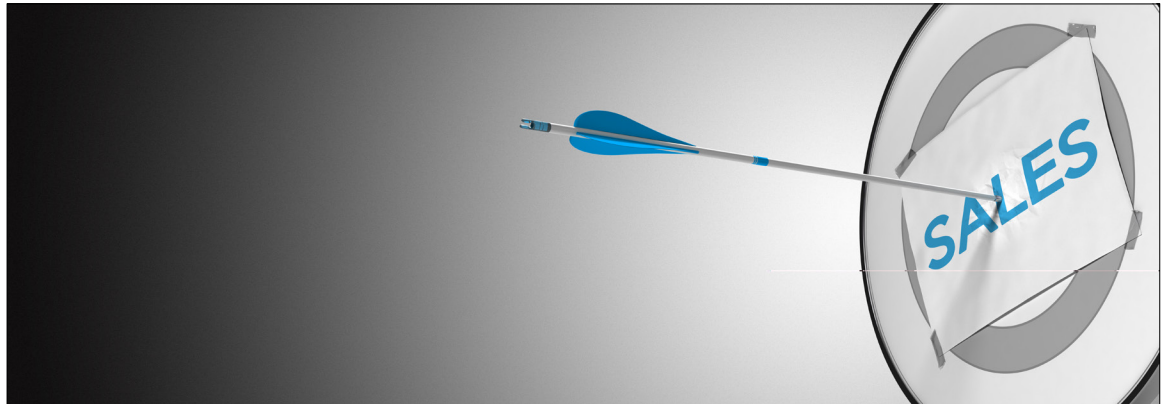
FORMAL COMPLAINTS	ADVISORY OPINIONS	DECLARATORY ORDERS	INFORMAL COMPLAINTS	INFORMAL REQUESTS	MISCELLANEOUS	FEBRUARY TOTALS
15	0	2	16	33	19	85

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WEBINAR SPOTLIGHT

Visit www.onlinemediacampus.com to register today!



6 Sales Tactics You Need To Do In 2023

MARCH 30 FROM 1-2 P.M.

IN THIS WEBINAR...

If you are in a transition, a sales leader acquiring new talent, or want to stay ahead of the curve and better situate yourself for sales success for 2023 and beyond, these six sales techniques should help tremendously. This training is for sales leaders at all levels and will help reconstruct a solid sales strategy you can enhance and build upon throughout the year!

ABOUT THE PRESENTER...

Richard E. Brown is a News/Media Alliance Rising Star recipient, the former director of renewals and digital sales strategy at LPI, and the former director of digital operations and sales of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. He recently served as the head of digital subscriber churn for Gannett | USA TODAY NETWORK and is now the senior director of retention for The Daily Beast. He is also a member of the board of directors for the Wisconsin Newspaper Association Foundation.

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Questions? Contact jshepherd@inanews.com



FREE MEMBER EXCHANGE

▼ HELP WANTED

SENIOR STAFF WRITER. Business Publications Corporation (BPC), an award-winning media and communications company, is seeking a full-time journalist to cover business news in Greater Des Moines for the Business Record, our flagship division. The right candidate will join our experienced staff to lead the Business Record's coverage of the people, issues and trends affecting the business community as the region continues to grow and transform. This reporter's primary focuses will include real estate, development and local government; the role will also encompass producing a variety of business stories.

The position requires a strong writer who can develop a beat and write in-depth analysis pieces on a variety of business topics for our weekly print edition, website, e-newsletters and specialty magazines. This person must function with a great deal of autonomy, building sources on their beats and managing their story schedules.

This person is also given freedom to generate a majority of their own story ideas. The ideal candidate must also be able to report and write daily business news items quickly and efficiently for our website and be able to keep a daily pulse on the community.

Previous business writing experience is a plus; however, it is not a requirement. The candidate must have a solid foundation in AP style, the principles of journalism and have a desire to represent the Business Record at a large number of community events and network with the community both in person, virtually and via social media. In addition, this person must have comfort leading panel discussions in front of an audience.

Basic photography skills, video production experience and the ability to help our organization move forward in the digital world are major pluses, but not required.

Management experience, project management and editing skills are not required, but the role has the flexibility to be adapted to utilize skills of this nature.

A passion for the Des Moines and Iowa, and a desire to tell the story of our communities is a priority.

Visit <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Job/Details/1287240> to apply. Please include a cover letter with your resume.

SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER. The Indianola Independent Advocate and Record-Herald, an independent, Iowa-owned digital plus print newspaper, is seeking help managing our Town News, Audience Plus subscription environment. The job will be a flexible, part-time, remote position setting up subscriptions and rates in the Town News offer-builder environment on an occasional basis and helping troubleshoot user issues when needed. Happy to work through a newspaper that uses this service and is willing to make its team available or an individual who works in this environment and would like to earn some extra income outside of regular work hours. Call 515-250-3698 or email amy@indianola-ia.com to discuss options. 0101

▼ FOR SALE

WANTED: Old Apple Laser Writer printer. Laser Writer 16/600 or Laser Writer Pro, working or parts. Call the Don at the Avoca Journal Herald 402-681-4763.

View and submit ads on the Internet at www.INAnews.com. Students and professionals may also submit their resumes for online viewing.

There is no charge for most of these ads. They are a free service to INA active (newspaper) members only. The name of the newspaper in the ad must be the same as published in the current INA Directory.

If you are trying to help an employee relocate, please send us the ad information on your letterhead, rather than having the employee write us. We will not run ads for persons living in a member's town without first clearing the ad with the publisher.

Please have copy to the INA office no later than noon on Monday. The INA will make the determination of whether an ad qualifies for free or paid publication. If payment for an ad is not enclosed with the ad, the INA will require payment in advance before the ad will be published.

Ads for products or services which could be marketed for a profit may be published for a fee of \$10 per insertion, paid in advance, with a 40-word maximum.

Recruitment (help wanted) ads for positions in states other than Iowa may be published for a fee of \$25 per insertion, with a 100-word maximum.

For more information, contact Cicely Gordon at cgordon@inanews.com.



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POLICE VIDEO - cont. from page 1

powerful.”

The impact of the footage of both deaths has led to important public conversations about the extreme actions some law officers engage in, she told her IPIB colleagues.

Pottorff said she has been disappointed Iowa lawmakers are unwilling to consider needed middle-ground solutions — a compromise that would allow some law enforcement video to remain confidential, while allowing for the release of certain other video, such as those showing incidents ending in an unarmed person being shot by officers.

But such a compromise will not be considered by the Legislature until law enforcement recognizes more transparency is critically important to maintaining Iowans’ respect and confidence in law enforcement. The Iowa Newspaper Association held a series of discussions with prosecutors and police several years ago in trying to find such a compromise. But law enforcement dug in and refused to budge, and the association’s efforts went nowhere.

Another sign of Iowa being out of step on transparency came in January, after the Iowa attorney general’s office completed its investigation of the fatal shooting of a 16-year-old Des Moines boy by three police officers.

Officers were called to an apartment by the boy’s stepfather after the teen pulled a gun on him. Officers tried to persuade the boy to drop the weapon, imploring him 70 times to put the gun down. When he raised the gun and pointed it directly at officers, they fired 14 shots, fatally wounding him.

There have been no assertions officers acted improperly during the incident. The boy’s relatives and a friend who were in the apartment did not criticize the officers or their decision to shoot.

Following the Des Moines Police Department’s longstanding transparency practice, at the conclusion of the state’s investigation police planned to release a diagram of the shooting scene, the recording of the 911 call, photos from the scene and videos from the officers’ uniform cameras.

But the Des Moines city legal staff stepped in and stopped the release. The lawyers said it would violate Iowa’s juvenile confidentiality laws if the video were made public.

The city attorneys said the video shows a minor committing a delinquent act — pointing a gun at police. Revisions made in Iowa’s juvenile justice laws in 2016 require records concerning a minor involved in a delinquent act to be kept confidential until a complaint is filed in court, the attorneys said.

Because Trevontay Jenkins died in this incident, no juvenile court charge was filed — and no video could be released, in the opinion of the city’s lawyers.

The analysis by the city’s legal staff, and the unwillingness of lawmakers to bring needed transparency to certain police incidents, means that sooner or later there is likely to be a nightmare scenario in which an Iowa teen or adult is gunned down or beaten to death, much like Tyre Nichols or Laquan McDonald, and police will refuse to release their video.

It is overdue for Iowa to catch up with other states in the important area of transparency of police video.

Randy Evans, the executive director of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, can be reached at IowaFOICouncil@gmail.com.