

THE DAILY STANDARD

WEEKEND PERSPECTIVE

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Be persistent in demand for public records

I just wanted to thank The Daily Standard for running the series on the Sunshine Law. I think it is vital to the health of the community that people know what information they have a right to see. Even though it is public by law, and Mercer County scored perfect in the AP poll. Don't expect everything to be delivered on a silver platter. You may still have to put in a little time and persistence.

I had wanted to get a copy of a frivolous domestic disturbance report filed on me this weekend. After requesting a summary of all information pulled up by my name and social security number, to check for any other such reports. I noticed only one entry was completely blanked out, including the date. This I assumed was the information I had come to get. After a few questions I was informed that line was blanked out to protect the identity of the suspect. Even though I was the suspect. I asked for a copy of that report, and was denied, stating I

could not have it because the suspect was never charged.

After examining the Sunshine Law, I returned to speak with the chief of police. Thankfully, he was available promptly. I asked him for a copy of the blanked out report, with little discussion, he disappeared from the lobby. After a 45-minute wait, he emerged with the report, dotted with black lines. The suspect's identity must be protected, not the report as a whole. I have to fill in my name to make it make sense, but at least I know the content of the report.

Don't stop at your first denial or your second or third, public records are public. Get yourself a copy of the Sunshine Law and exert your rights. If we want to protect our rights, we are going to have to learn them and use them.

Paul Fisher
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