



New England **F**irst **A**men**F**ment Coalition

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."



Cavanagh named NEFAC executive director

Nov.1, 2010

For immediate release

Rosanna Cavanagh

(Providence Journal photo)

PROVIDENCE, R.I. - Rosanna Cavanagh, who holds law and business degrees from Cornell University, has been named executive director of the New England First Amendment Coalition, a regional organization devoted to furthering freedom of information and government transparency.

Her appointment was announced today by Thomas Heslin, executive editor of the *Providence (R.I.) Journal* and president of NEFAC, a non-profit whose leadership includes journalists, educators and First Amendment lawyers from the six New England states. NEFAC works in partnership with the [First Amendment Center](#) at Northeastern University in Boston.

"We are excited to move NEFAC forward as an organization and the timing could not be better for us to take this step," Heslin said.

"As Franklin D. Roosevelt said, 'In the truest sense, freedom cannot be bestowed; it must be achieved.' "

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Cavanagh brings to the NEFAC position experience at the corporate law firm of Ropes & Gray in Boston, and past experience as board member, treasurer and co-chair of the fundraising committee for Everybody Wins Metro Boston.

"I am thrilled to be the first Executive Director of NEFAC; I believe strongly in the mission of freedom of information and recognize as true Judge Damon Keith's statement that, "democracies die behind closed doors."

"NEFAC's ultimate goal is to strengthen our democracy so it is in fact a government by the people and for the people," Cavanagh said.

Heslin said there's an urgency to NEFAC's mission. "The public's right to know is under constant assault in New England."

He noted the clouding of government transparency highlighted in recent issues of the [NEFAC Report](#), a monthly compendium of First-Amendment related issues from print, online and electronic media across New England.

- The Massachusetts ethics commission takes seven months to surrender financial disclosure forms.

- Vermont town councils routinely go into unlawful executive session.

- State legislatures regularly carve out exceptions to freedom of information laws.

- Public bodies all across New England drag their feet in response to public record requests.

"Day after day, the region's press brings to light another effort to shut out the public from the public's business. And each month NEFAC gathers those accounts and distributes them to a growing list of interested parties: journalists, lawyers, ordinary citizens, and politicians," Heslin said.

Under Cavanagh's direction, NEFAC plans to expand its activities and put in place more educational opportunities for ordinary citizens and members of the press to learn about freedom of information laws and how to best exact

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[NEFAC's Mission](#)

New England First

compliance with those laws by government agencies.

NEFAC works in partnership with [Northeastern University's First Amendment Center](#) to further the cause of government transparency and the inter-relationship between the First Amendment and open government.

**Amendment
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