

NEWSMAN'S SEARCHLIGHT:
FLORIDA SUNSHINE LAW

BY

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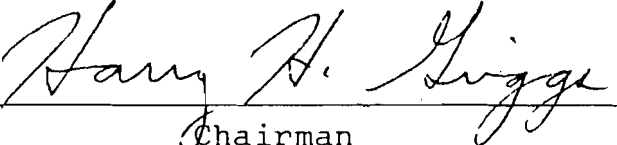
A major development in U.S. mass media law during the 1970s has been the total introduction of new legislation designed to open government policy and decision making processes to public scrutiny.

Florida occupies a unique position in the development of sunshine law. The State was neither the first nor the last to get an operative law, yet it is now considered a Florida concept. Rated only slightly above average at best it is perhaps the only example of an "all-out attempt" to break open the deliberative and decision making elements of government. It also served as a model for the federal sunshine law enacted in 1976.

The law is based on a fundamental precept of modern press and democratic theory. Analysis of the sunshine law provides an opportunity to examine its relationships with other difficult concepts and is particularly useful in

highlighting the practical difficulties of implementation of a broad concept. Practical implementation seems inevitably to cause a need for legal compromise between conflicting and competing interests and rights in modern society. Practical exigencies of making such a concept workable have therefore forced many resorts to judicial interpretations.

A broad theory has had to give way in some areas to the needs of practicality but appears to have improved government and the acknowledgement of human rights.


Chairman