



Dave Frohnmayer

Photo by Erich Boekelheide

Press still is free, Frohnmayer says

By DAN MAIZE
Of the Emerald

American journalism has the best constitutional protection of any country, Oregon Attorney General Dave Frohnmayer told a group of student journalists Wednesday.

"We had to wait 125 years (since the adoption of the Constitution) before the first case dealing with freedom of the press went to the Supreme Court," he said, adding that Constitutional amendments have endured because "the courts enforce them."

Frohnmayer, a former three-term state legislator and University law professor, became the state's attorney general last January. During one of his terms as a state representative, Frohnmayer was labeled "the most effective state legislator in office" by a Portland newspaper poll.

Since becoming attorney general, Frohnmayer has gained a reputation for defending the freedom of the press and the Constitution. Some of the top journalists in the state took notice and rewarded Frohnmayer with the Oregon Newspaper Publishers' Association

Freedom of Information Award in July of this year.

Frohnmayer said he currently is concerned with the role of media in court trials. The Oregon Supreme Court decided recently to let a member of the media tape the proceedings for the state's 1980 reapportionment plan, but Frohnmayer said this idea, at the very least, "should be used in selective cases."

Courtrooms with hidden cameras would be a good solution, he said, because a defendant wouldn't want to face "journalists tripping over one another during the closing arguments."

Frohnmayer said he is disappointed with the way the Reagan administration is handling some constitutional issues. Reagan currently is trying to exempt certain agencies (including the FBI and CIA) from the Freedom of Information Act, a situation that Frohnmayer is "uncomfortable" with.

Frohnmayer said he also is concerned about his own role as he attempts to keep his position non-partisan. "You won't see any Republican or Democratic issues in my office," he said.

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