

## Got Sunshine? A National Campaign for Open Government



By [Catherine Bertram](#)

### **Sunshine Week is a national campaign to raise public awareness for a more open government**

It started in March of 2005, when the American Society of Newspaper Editors used a [Knight grant](#) to bring together more than 50 journalism groups to launch the first [Sunshine Week](#). Sunshine laws help keep our government accountable and transparent by mandating access to meetings and information. During Sunshine Week journalists and others shine a light on the spirit and intent of sunshine laws. Each state has laws to keep public meetings and documents exactly that — public. The Freedom of Information Act is one example.

Here in D.C., advocates for patient safety are pushing for access to information that would promote patient safety and allow consumers to choose between hospitals based on available data such as the infection rate of each hospital or the complication rates for certain procedures. The hospitals have this data readily available. This information should be available to D.C. patients and their families. More than half of the states have mandatory reporting requirements for hospital infections. No such requirement exists in the District of Columbia. We need support the D.C. Council and Mayor Fenty when they push for this legislation. Then we can determine whether the D.C. Department of Health is doing

all they can to make sure all the D.C. Hospitals work to reduce the number of hospital acquired infections.

Let's get it out in the sunshine!

*About the author:*

*[Catherine Bertram](#) is board certified in civil trials and was recently nominated as a 2010 Super Lawyer for Washington, D.C. Ms. Bertram has 20 years of trial [experience](#) and is unique in that she was formerly the Director of Risk Management for Georgetown University Hospital so she brings a wealth of knowledge to her practice including how hospitals should be run and what doctors and nurses can do to protect patients. She is a partner with the firm and devotes [her practice](#) to the representation of patients and families of loved ones who have been injured or lost due to medical errors. Ms. Bertram lectures regularly to lawyers and health care providers, nationally and locally, regarding patient safety, medical negligence and other related issues. She has also recently published a chapter in a medical textbook. She can be reached by email at [cbertram@reganfirm.com](mailto:cbertram@reganfirm.com) or by phone 202-822-1875 in her office in Washington, D.C.*