

**The Public's Right to Know**  
**Peter Scheer in conversation with Reese Erlich**  
**Thursday, 10/12/06, Lunch (12:30 – 1:20)**  
**Founders Lecture Hall**

Framing Questions for Peter Scheer:

- In your opinion, what is the biggest violation of the First Amendment in the history of the United States? What impact did it have on our nation's democracy?
- What are some examples of the First Amendment being violated or compromised today? What impact do these violations have on everyday citizens? How might they affect today's youth?
- If this already hasn't been mentioned, what is your view on the fining, jailing or the threat of jailing of journalists (for example, Lance Williams and Mark Fainaru-Wada in the Barry Bonds steroids case) for not revealing their sources? Are there circumstances in which these punishments are justified?
- How does the California First Amendment Coalition protect the First Amendment, and help to better inform citizens in our community? How can we as students get involved?

Background:

Peter Scheer has been the Executive Director of California's First Amendment Coalition (<http://www.cfac.org>) since June, 2004.

“The California First Amendment Coalition is funded by individuals, groups and media outlets, including The Press-Enterprise, to advise journalists and citizens on state laws concerning open meetings, free speech and access to public information.”  
([http://www.pe.com/localnews/desert/stories/PE\\_News\\_Local\\_D\\_dbias16.41b4fb5.html](http://www.pe.com/localnews/desert/stories/PE_News_Local_D_dbias16.41b4fb5.html))

Mr. Scheer received his JD from Harvard Law school in 1978 and his BA at Amherst College where he graduated magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa.

As both a lawyer and a journalist, Scheer has worked as the editor and publisher for *The Recorder*, a daily legal journal in San Francisco, and the publisher of *Legal Times*, a weekly paper about law and lobbying from Washington, DC. He has been in the U.S. Justice department practicing appellate law and has also practiced privately. Scheer was a partner in the Washington, DC, based firm Onek, Klein and Farr as well as general counsel (the title of the chief lawyer of a legal department) in the National Security Archive. He has experience arguing appellate cases in most federal courts of appeal and in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Scheer was founder of [callaw.com](http://callaw.com), a site providing legal news and information online, and [yourwall.com](http://yourwall.com) a photography gallery online. His many articles concerning the First Amendment have been in print in journals including the *Sacramento Bee*, *San Jose Mercury News*, *Orange County Register*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *San Diego Union*

*Tribune, Los Angeles Daily Journal, The Recorder* and *American Lawyer* magazine and online in sites such as [Salon.com](http://Salon.com) and [Slate.com](http://Slate.com).

Scheer is a staunch and passionate supporter of the first amendment rights, with emphasis on the freedom of speech for journalists and other members of the media. In addition, he aggressively fought for the approval of Proposition 54, now an amendment to the state constitution, stating that the public has the right to know about the government and what, why, and how it goes about doing so. Above all, Scheer is a strong believer in the "people's right to know."

Very recently, in August, 2006, Peter Scheer and the California's First Amendment Coalition were recipients of the Eugene S. Pulliam First Amendment Award and the \$10,000 prize. This award recognizes elite individuals and organizations' "accomplishments on behalf of the freedoms provided by the First Amendment."

Article: <http://www.spj.org/news.asp?ref=612>

Quote: "One has to be concerned with not impeding on two constitutional rights: the right to petition the government, and the other, of course, is free speech. If you make it too difficult, too onerous, for people to express their views, you've gone too far."

Links to some articles by Peter Scheer:

*SF Chronicle* Open Forum Article on Freedom of the Press-

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2006/08/29/EDGGDKQOM01.DTL&hw=Peter+Scheer&sn=001&sc=1000>

Article on how local politicians and members of the judiciary branch have too much privacy from public

<http://www.cfac.org/content/index.php/cfac-news/commentary6/>

Pro- Proposition 59 Letter

[http://www.cfac.org/Attachments/prop\\_59\\_ballot.html](http://www.cfac.org/Attachments/prop_59_ballot.html)

*SF Chronicle* Open Forum article on Tribal Gambling

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2006/01/27/EDGNSGT5UD1.DTL>

Quote: "One has to be concerned with not impeding on two constitutional rights: the right to petition the government, and the other, of course, is free speech. If you make it too difficult, too onerous, for people to express their views, you've gone too far."

Assignment:

- For the given speaker or panel:
  - A. Develop a list of framing questions for the panel or for the Q&A with the speaker.
  - B. For teachers, students, and other interested community members, develop a short (1 or 2 page) summary of the main issues that the panel/speaker will most likely address.
    1. Include links to web sites/articles that present multiple perspectives on these issues
    2. Include links to biographic information and the written work of our guests.
- Send an electronic copy of this information to Mark by Wednesday, 9/20.