

FOI TASK FORCE October 16, 2013

Chairman Arce, Chairman DeCesare, and distinguished members of the task force.

Thank you for allowing me a few minutes to talk with you. My name is Coleen Marren and I am here representing the Connecticut Association of Broadcasters and the company I work for, FOXCT, where I serve as the television stations news director.

I know you have been hearing from many people who represent both sides of this emotional issue. I won't deny to you that I, too, am emotional about this discussion. I have covered many, many disturbing news stories in my time, but the sadness of the tragedy in Newtown still resounds in our newsroom.

However, the media have a responsibility to the public. We are the public. We are the liaison for the public who can't be everywhere to gather information. That is our job. And some days, like December 14, it is a very hard job. But we must get to the bottom of why our lovely children were put in harm's way and how we....as the adults, can make the world better for ALL the children. After all, as the Hartford Courant so eloquently stated, they are all our children. This is the front page of the Courant from that horrible week. In my long career, it is the only newspaper I have ever hung on my office wall. I want it to be a reminder to me that we, the media, have a job to do for those smiles and we need to do it right.

Providing information on what happened that fateful day or many other fateful days for families of those lost is our job. We need to listen to the 911 tapes and make sure the police have done their job, and, they usually do. We need to know why these things happen and hope that our research and reporting will bring light to city governments so they can decide how much money to spend from their tight budget to protect a family.

I can tell you from twenty three years as a local television news director, and ten of those years spent right here in my home state of Connecticut, we are a responsible LOT. We talk at length about the use of 911 tapes and what we should air. We don't just air photos because we have them. We are moral, we are ethical, we are fair and we have big hearts. We care. We live here too.

If we allow our government to function in secrecy, then who are we? What do we tell our children? We couldn't find out how or why a crime happened because our government thought we should not tell the public?

I was struck during the days after December 14 that our newsroom covered the funerals by honoring the lives of the children with tributes. We talked at length that we didn't have to cover the funerals. In fact, all the four local TV news directors agreed that we should allow the families to grieve. We would honor the children in our news with loving pictures of them. We talked every day about being good neighbors. We were all struck that Veronique Pozner, the mother of darling Noah, insisted that Governor Malloy look at Noah in an open casket so that it would be "real" for our Governor. He wept, as we all did.

Evil events happen in society. But in my view, good always outweighs the ugly. We, the informed residents of Connecticut, should strive to keep our government open and transparent, just like Noah's little coffin. After all, they are all our children...we should be all the OPEN adults.

We cannot allow those who would abuse the public's right to be informed to precipitate the censorship of that right.