

# Message from the Chairman



2007 and 2008 were unique years for the Freedom Forum.

Those years include one of the most important dates in the foundation's history, April 11, 2008, the day the doors opened at the Newseum, the world's most interactive museum, in Washington, D.C.

The public poured in to learn about news and the First Amendment through a dazzling, high-tech array of theaters, galleries, games and kiosks. And the nation had a new beacon of freedom, right on America's Main Street, Pennsylvania Avenue, about midway between the U.S. Capitol and the White House: The 45 words of the First Amendment, etched in stone on a 74-foot marble slab on the front wall of the Newseum.

The Newseum rose from years of planning and from a commitment by the Freedom Forum to build an engine for educating the public on how news is gathered and reported, about the meaning and significance of the First Amendment, and about the importance of diversity in the nation's newsrooms. Those three Freedom Forum priorities — the Newseum, the First Amendment and diversity — are reflected in this annual report, along with our Free Spirit program, trustees and other information. The report covers 2007 and 2008.

We will give you a taste of the Newseum on pages 4 and 5, but for the first time we have produced a separate annual report dedicated solely to the Newseum, its grand opening and its many features and activities. The Newseum's annual report is available from the Freedom Forum Publications Department at 202/292-6100.

Beginning on page 6 you'll find highlights from the extensive resources and programs of the

First Amendment Center. In 2007 the center's State of the First Amendment survey made news with the finding that 65% of respondents said the Founders of the United States intended it to be a "Christian nation" — even though, as First Amendment Center Senior Scholar Charles Haynes noted, the Constitution never mentions God or Christianity.

I would also like to draw your attention to the extensive information available anytime from the First Amendment Center Online at [firstamendmentcenter.org](http://firstamendmentcenter.org).

This authoritative Web site offers a useful combination of up-to-the-minute news about First Amendment court cases and issues backed by solid research on topics ranging across all five freedoms in the amendment. We want people to understand the importance to our democratic society of what the First Amendment protects. A sampling of the commentary and analysis from the site, on pages 9-17, demonstrates why this site should be your first stop in learning about the First Amendment.

The years covered here also saw the Diversity Institute come into its own as a premier school for working journalists, particularly journalists of color, who are seeking to learn how to use the digital tools of the new millennium in reporting the news. At a time when newspapers face serious economic challenges, news technology has created tremendous opportunities for a new generation of journalists to survive and thrive in budget-conscious newsrooms. Our diversity programs, reported on pages 22-29, constitute a school for the future of the news business — a school where reporters, editors, photographers and artists learn how to combine technical skill with good news judgment.



Charles Overby welcomes guests at the Newseum dedication ceremony, April 11, 2008.

Even as 2008 brought excitement, it also brought sadness with the death of one of America's preeminent political journalists, Tim Russert of NBC News, who also was a Newseum trustee. The loss to his family, to the world of news and to the Freedom Forum and Newseum is incalculable. He spoke to our 2007 and 2008 Free Spirit Journalism Scholars at the NBC News Washington bureau, as you'll see on page 31 in the section devoted to that annual program for young people interested in journalism as a career.

I hope you will take away from this annual report a sense of the Freedom Forum's priorities and programs. I also invite you to notice the diverse expertise and high caliber of the trustees and senior staff of the foundation and its affiliates. They help keep us looking to the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles L. Overby".

**Charles L. Overby**  
Chairman, chief executive officer  
and president,  
*Freedom Forum and Diversity Institute,*  
chief executive officer, *Newseum*