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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Shorecrest Student Wins Open Government Essay Prize

Emory Hoelscher-Hull of Shorecrest High School has won the 2019 Scott Johnson Open Government Essay Competition, administered by the Washington Coalition for Open Government.

The purpose of the contest is two-fold: to help to educate young people about the importance of open-government principles; and to honor the memory of the late Scott Johnson, a former Washington Coalition for Open Government board member and attorney with Stokes Lawrence.

Hoelscher-Hull will receive a $1,000 prize funded by Stokes Lawrence. The Shorecrest senior will enroll in Montana State University in the fall, studying environmental science.

The 2019 topic was, *"What is 'open government' to me, and why should it matter to my generation?"*

Twenty-seven public and private high school students from all parts of the state submitted entries. The winning essay will be posted on the WCOG website, www.washingtoncog.org

Hoelscher-Hull's essay was titled, "The Importance of Open Government in the Fight Against Climate Change." She wrote:

"Despite the many other things my generation may disagree on, preserving our home seems to be the one thing young people are united over. We can, and will, solve the climate issue. We can do this by increasing transparency in climate data to promote education and collaboration, and by ensuring accountability in governmental decisions surrounding climate change."

The contest judges cited the winning essay for demonstrating substantial research and writing with passion and clarity that members of her generation should care about open government. She built her case on the potentially devastating effects of climate change that may unfold during the lifetimes of her generation and its children. Only with full access to public and scientific information, she contended, can good decisions be made.

"Few other entrants made such a convincing argument," wrote contest judge Fred Obee, executive director of the Washington Newspaper Publishers Association.

David Seago, former WCOG board member and retired editorial page editor of the Tacoma News Tribune, chaired the judging. In addition to Obee, the other judges were board members Dale Phelps, Editor and Vice President of News for The News Tribune in Tacoma, and Mike Fancher, retired executive editor of The Seattle Times.

Scott A.W. Johnson passed away unexpectedly on October 20, 2012, at the age of 53. Raised in Cheney and Olympia, WA, he graduated from Olympia High School, received his undergraduate degree in Business from the [University of Washington](#) and his J.D. from American University, Washington College of Law. His 26 years of practicing law began at Perkins Coie followed by almost two decades as a partner at Stokes Lawrence.

He worked on the Board of Washington Coalition for Open Government and was to be sworn in as a King County Superior Court Judge in January 2013, fulfilling a lifelong dream.

The Washington Coalition for Open Government (WCOG) advocates for the people's right to access government information. WCOG is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works through the courts and the Legislature to defend and strengthen Washington's open government laws.

WCOG was founded in 2002 by a group of individuals representing organizations with a broad spectrum of opinions and interests but all dedicated to the principles of strengthening the state's open government laws and protecting the public's access to government at all levels. WCOG stands for the principle that transparency and public participation are essential building blocks of good government.

For more information about the contest or the Washington Coalition for Open Government, contact info@washingtoncog.org.

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