



A HOLIDAY MESSAGE FROM ANDY SHAW, EXEC. DIR. OF THE BETTER GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2009

Dear Friends,

The Better Government Association has a lot to celebrate this holiday season and, at the top of the list, are the hundreds of supporters who've listened to our message of civic engagement and agreed that we offer one of the best hopes for actually cleaning up government in Illinois and not just talking about it.

We're combining the BGA's basic tools -- aggressive investigations, alone and in partnership with local media; timely lawsuits challenging bad laws and demanding transparency ; and tireless public advocacy -- with a BGA 2.0 that uses radio and TV, social media and a soon-to-be-built interactive website, a virtual "Good Government Town Hall," to educate and motivate fed-up taxpayers so they'll join us in a 24-7 advocacy campaign that demands real change with "calls to action" that accompany every investigation. We will continue to EX-pose. But we will also PRO-pose. With every investigation. Every day.

The short-term goal is to eliminate the "corruption tax" we all pay when government is run for the benefit of the politicians and not the public, through waste, fraud, inefficiency, cronyism, nepotism and outright corruption. The corruption tax is estimated at billions of dollars a year, so real change means real savings for citizens and businesses. Our economic health and well-being depend on it.

Our long-term goal is to restore **FAITH** in government, which is an acronym for Fairness, Accountability, Integrity, Transparency and Honesty. This is what we, as citizens and taxpayers, are entitled to. Our civic spirit depends on it. The days of shrugging our shoulders and saying Chicago or Illinois "ain't ready for reform" are over.

In the six months since I became the BGA's President and CEO, we have raised nearly \$700,000 from individuals, businesses and foundations. We've hired a new Director of Investigations and a Chief Operating Officer, we've brought in several contract employees to help us with fundraising, grant writing, policy research and investigations. We've filed lawsuits that forced the release of key documents and we've partnered with local newspapers and TV stations on historic and cutting-edge investigations.

But we still have a long way to go. Our immediate needs include: More investigators, including former federal agents, police detectives and journalists to help us identify and look into areas of

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government that either fly under the radar screen or still haven't cleaned up their acts; and a director of Public Policy to help us research best practices so our calls to action, either short-term remedies or long-term changes in law, are effective and efficient.

We also need to build up our membership base, develop and implement a communications strategy, and manage our website day-to-day in terms of content and technology.

So we're asking you to become a financial supporter as we head into the New Year. If you need more details about what we're about, read our "Civic Engagement" and "Fall Highlights" documents on the website www.bettergov.org. You can also use the web site to join or contribute to the BGA. And if you have any questions, email me at ashaw@bettergov.org or call me at 312-386-9097.

Let me end by saying this is a "perfect storm" moment in Illinois: Government is in crisis at all levels; the Better Government Association has the vision and the leadership to lead the reform fight; and all we need now is the continued support of residents who, like Howard Beale in the seminal movie "Network," are "mad as hell and not going to take it any more."

Please help us make Chicago, Cook County and the state of Illinois places we can once again be proud of.

Happy Holidays,

Andy Shaw,
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