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Dear supporters,

This year’s BGA Luncheon theme was “Elections Matter.” Little did we know that afternoon that less than two months later we would see an election for the history books: a political neophyte and businessman shocked the pollsters and pundits by upsetting the first female candidate to be nominated for the office.

Though that race stole the headlines, important elections aren’t just at the top of the ticket.

A growing BGA priority has been to fight the rampant civic disengagement we see in our municipalities and across Illinois.

I believe the fight for better government has to be waged on two fronts:

First: watchdogs holding officials accountable and advocating reforms.

Too often the election system protects incumbents by making it unnecessarily difficult for people to register, vote, get on the ballot and even think about running for office. And the BGA is working with our good government coalition and state lawmakers to fix that.

Second: (here’s where you come in) the public supporting candidates who want to serve the public—not themselves.

The BGA shines a light on government and holds public officials accountable, but then it’s up to you—the voters—to decide what to do next. The BGA doesn’t have subpoena power, and we can’t tell you who to vote for.

As 2016 comes to a close, we hope you resolve to take action in 2017. Become educated about the issues and players, perhaps by attending BGA events and reading our investigations. Register to vote and head to the polls on Election Day. And talk to your family, friends and neighbors about the better government you deserve and want to see in Illinois.

Democracy is a verb. Let’s get moving.

Your watchdog,

Andy Shaw
MISSION: The BGA’s mission is to promote integrity, transparency and accountability in government by exposing waste, fraud and corruption, advocating effective public policy and informing and engaging the community.

The BGA works within **FIVE PILLARS OF ACTION** — to investigate, litigate, educate, advocate and communicate — in an effort to bring better government to Illinois. We go beyond exposing problems to proposing solutions and advocating good government reforms.
BGA’S FIVE PILLARS OF ACTION

INVESTIGATE
The BGA’s Investigative Unit examines allegations of waste, fraud, corruption and mismanagement in city, county, suburban and state government.

LITIGATE
We are entitled to access certain public records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). When the BGA is denied access to public documents, we take legal action to force government agencies to comply with the law.

EDUCATE
The BGA’s Idea Forums, Candid Conversations and Watchdog Trainings are free events that inform, engage and empower the public.

ADVOCATE
The BGA’s Policy Unit advocates for a more open, accountable and efficient government through public policy reforms.

COMMUNICATE
The BGA communicates through hundreds of media stories and appearances with dozens of media partners around the state.
575 investigations
154 results
35 awards
50 legal actions
16,000 people engaged
INVESTIGATIONS AND RESULTS

Since 2009, the BGA has produced 575 investigations of waste, fraud, corruption and mismanagement of government in Illinois. In recent years, the BGA’s watchdog work has prompted more than 154 results and reforms that will save taxpayers an estimated $50 million.
Top Ten Investigations

**Trump’s ‘Sanctuary City’ Plan Could Cost Chicago $3.6 Billion**

*DECEMBER 9, 2016*

Despite a clear lack of specific details from the president-elect, a BGA analysis shows that Chicago could lose billions in federal aid in 2017 if Donald Trump follows through on his campaign threat.

**Chicago Police Misconduct – Rising Financial Toll**

*JANUARY 31, 2016*

BGA analysis shows how much police misconduct costs taxpayers: $106 million in 2014 and 2015 alone, covering misconduct-related settlements, judgments, legal fees and other costs.

**How CPS Failed Laquan McDonald**

*JANUARY 31, 2016*

Teen gunned down by a Chicago cop had rough road through deeply flawed Chicago Public Schools, child-welfare systems.

**Beyond the Rubble: Life After CHA Upheaval**

*MARCH-SEPTEMBER 2016*

In a series of stories with the Chicago Sun-Times, we examine the human and economic effects of the Chicago Housing Authority’s “Plan for Transformation” – a multi-year effort to move tens of thousands of low-income residents from crime-ridden, high-rise public housing in Chicago.

**Illinois Awash In Tax Breaks**

*OCTOBER 19, 2016*

A BGA investigation finds Illinois has 257 separate categories of breaks that cost the state $9.4 billion in fiscal 2015. That’s more than the gaping $8 billion budget hole the state is now struggling to fill.
Top Ten Investigations

Rauner Reprieve On Costly Credit Swap Solution May Have Political Timetable
OCTOBER 23, 2016
Deal to spare the state potentially costly penalties expires the day after the next election for governor in 2018.

Trump Towers With Huge Tax Savings
JUNE 18, 2016
President-elect Donald Trump saved a whopping $800,000 in property taxes on his unoccupied penthouse because of a unique Cook County tax policy.

Chicago Payroll Packed With Six-Figure Salaries
AUGUST 4, 2016
Adding to the city’s financial burdens, the number of high-paid workers has ballooned by 92 percent since 2013.

Blagojevich’s Inner Circle: Where Are They Now?
JULY 30, 2016
The BGA takes a look at where his former aides landed. One worked for U2’s Bono and Jill Biden, another served New York Mayor Bloomberg, while others dropped out of sight.

Chicago Bag Tax Is About Green, But What Kind?
NOVEMBER 16, 2016
Mayor Rahm Emanuel says bag tax is about the environment, but critics say it’s about cash.
Illinois Adopts 22 Good Government Laws Supported By BGA

Yes, reform is possible!
In 2016, the BGA policy team advocated for the adoption of 22 good government laws including: 9 accountability laws, 5 transparency laws, 4 government streamlining laws, 3 ethics and 1 criminal justice reform law. That’s progress!

BGA Lawsuit Prompts Release of CPD Shooting Videos
Judge orders CPD to release all files and videotapes of fatal Chicago Police Department shootings over the last five years in response to a BGA lawsuit.

Forced Release of Emanuel Emails, New Policy Change
As a result of a BGA investigation and legal action, the City of Chicago and Mayor Rahm Emanuel release more than 3,200 pages of Emanuel’s private emails related to city business—subject to any applicable legal exemptions—and institute a new policy that will ban city employees and officials from using their private email accounts to conduct city business.

Court Overturns Injunction Blocking Release Of Police Misconduct Records
Chalk up a win for transparency and accountability as the Illinois Appellate Court lifts an injunction blocking the release of police misconduct complaint records.

Casino Pays $1.65 Million
Rivers Casino in Des Plaines pays a $1.65 million fine following an Illinois gaming board investigation spurred in part by the BGA.
Local Governments Told To Rein In Travel Spending

A new state law inspired by BGA investigations means meals, hotels and other travel expenses will get tougher scrutiny.

Rauner Housing Appointee Out Amid Allegations

After inquiries from the BGA, the Rauner administration forces out a housing official amid pay-to-play allegations.

Elected Officials Agree To Pay It Back

Following questions from the BGA about nonprofits donating money to Illinois politicians, a number of elected officials agree to refund money.

Accused Of Perjury, Chicago Cop Quits

Several months after the BGA and CBS2 highlight the case of a Chicago cop who allegedly lied in court in an attempted murder case, the Chicago Police Department moves to fire her, and she resigns.

Cook County Circuit Court Employee Pleads Guilty

Dorothy Brown worker admits to lying to grand jury as part of probe of alleged pay-to-play in the agency.
AWARDS

The BGA is proud to report that its investigations and watchdog efforts have been honored with dozens of national and local awards in recent years. In 2015 the BGA won 8 journalism awards.
Awards

Lisagor Awards
May 2017

The Chicago Headline Club, the largest Society of Professional Journalists chapter in the country, presents awards that recognize the best of Chicago journalism and are named for Peter Lisagor, the Chicago Daily News’ Washington bureau chief from 1959 to 1976.

- **BEST POLITICAL AND GOVERNMENT REPORTING (circulation more than 100,000)**
  - **Series: Beyond the Rubble: Life after the CHA Upheaval with the Chicago Sun-Times**

- **BEST INVESTIGATIVE/PUBLIC SERVICE REPORTING**
  - **Series: Pension and Payroll in Illinois with the Chicago Sun-Times**

- **BEST CONTINUING BLOG (AFFILIATED)**
  - **Investigator’s Notebook**

Kogan Media Awards
May 2017

Two BGA stories were recognized by the Chicago Bar Association, which sponsors the awards contest.

- **BEST Technical REPORTING**
  - **Series: Beyond the Rubble: Life after the CHA Upheaval with the Chicago Sun-Times**

- **BEST INVESTIGATIVE/PUBLIC SERVICE REPORTING**
  - **BGA Forces Release of Mayor Rahm Emanuel Private Emails, Garners Landmark Policy Shift**
POLICY

The BGA Policy Unit advocates for a more open, accountable and efficient government through public policy reforms. The Policy Unit works to protect and strengthen open government in Illinois and to propose policy solutions to prevent corruption, inefficiency and waste in government.
In many ways, 2016 felt like the peak of governmental dysfunction. After a dramatic and contentious election cycle and ongoing Congressional gridlock, the country felt as divided as it had ever been. The state of Illinois ended the year still without a budget, while individuals and communities continued to suffer. Chicago was still reeling from the late 2015 video release of a white police officer shooting teenaged Laquan McDonald 16 times.

But in spite of the gridlock and division, some good government reforms were underway in Illinois and Chicago. The BGA policy team played a role in pushing them over the finish line.

22 good government bills supported by the Better Government Association passed in the Illinois General Assembly and were signed into law in 2016.
- These 22 bills included streamlining, transparency, accountability, ethics and criminal justice bills backed by the Better Government Association and other reform groups.

City Council is now subject to meaningful, independent Inspector General oversight.
- The Chicago City Council took a historic step in abolishing the ineffective Office of the Legislative Inspector General - the City Council’s separate, toothless watchdog - and expanding the Office of the Inspector General’s jurisdiction to include aldermen. The BGA Policy Unit lobbied aldermen, testified before City Council committees and published columns and blogs advocating for this change.

The BGA policy team moved the ball forward regarding the retention of police misconduct complaint records.
- Organizations and individuals interested in police transparency, armed with information, alerts and updates from BGA, wrote letters, contacted their legislators and spoke out stating their support for preserving Chicago police misconduct complaint records. While a bill in the Illinois General Assembly to guarantee preservation did not reach adoption, arbitrators interpreting the police union contract changed their initial position saying they could not agree that “civic developments since issuance of (an) Award should be summarily discounted” mentioning the “climate of the times...”. The Illinois Appellate Court upheld public access to thousands of Chicago police misconduct complaint records--those dating back more than five years that the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) sought to have destroyed. Since then, the Illinois Supreme Court has denied appeals from the FOP. These records should continue to be available to the public in electronic form once scanned and produced in response to pending FOIA requests.
Throughout 2016, the Policy Unit monitored and commented on local and state legislation. Our policy team kept an eye on proposed amendments to the Freedom of Information Act, smart streamlining legislation, the City of Chicago and Cook County budgets, proposed restrictions on public testimony at city and county meetings, and whether novel initiatives (such as quasi-public bodies and innovative investment funds) have adequate oversight and are subject to transparency laws. We will continue to weigh in when we see areas of concern.

The Policy Unit also contributes to the public education and civic engagement mission of the Better Government Association by monitoring and commenting on local and state legislation, periodically publishing in-depth analysis on pending legislative and policy issues, and contributing to civic engagement programming.

**Publishing**
- The BGA policy team maintains a blog on issues of note in local government. In 2016, we published articles on municipal bankruptcy, the selection processes for chiefs of police in major American cities, a recently implemented city debt transparency law, the recent history of non-binding ballot questions in Chicago, automatic voter registration, and the statewide transportation funding "lockbox" amendment, among others.

**Civic Engagement**
- The policy team helped plan a panel discussion on the use of Tax Increment Financing in the City of Chicago and contributed questions to three BGA Candid Conversations with local and state officials. The team also produced two candidate questionnaires and two voters’ guides to help educate readers on local and state elections.

**Highlights**
- **2,291 messages** were sent to legislators in 2016 in response to BGA-initiated action alerts
- BGA policy staff produced **30 blog posts** providing in-depth analysis of local and state current events
- BGA policy staff testified before city and state committees **5 times**
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

The BGA’s Civic Engagement Program encourages meaningful participation in civic activities. Programs are designed to allow discourse about civic issues and provide the public with the knowledge and know-how they need to access public information and effectively express their concerns about government.
Civic Engagement

Watchdog Training:

February 18, 2016
Watchdog Training: Governors State University

March 2, 2016
Watchdog Training: University of Illinois at Springfield

October 13, 2016
Watchdog Training: Urbana

November 18, 2016
Watchdog Training: Northwestern University

December 5, 2016
Watchdog Training: Chicago Urban League

Idea Forums:

April 14, 2016
Tracking TIFs
University of Illinois at Chicago

June 20, 2016
Impact of the Impasse: The Ripple Effect On Our Community and Economy
The Sangamo Club, Springfield

November 21, 2016
Laquan’s Legacy: Police Reform in Chicago
Columbia College
In 2016, BGA President and CEO Andy Shaw sat down for exclusive interviews with Dan Cronin—DuPage County Board Chairman, Kurt Summers—Chicago’s City Treasurer and Illinois Realtors in Springfield to discuss good government issues. The conversations are broadcast live online and available as videos at bettergov.org.
April 20, 2016
Inland Real Estate Group, Oakbrook

Dan Cronin, DuPage County Board Chairman, and Andy Shaw, BGA President and CEO, discussed the future of government streamlining and consolidation during a BGA “Candid Conversation.”

The conversation, which was streamed online, centered on Cronin’s three-year-plus effort to streamline government operations throughout DuPage County and how that effort fits with the BGA’s statewide government consolidation effort, “Smart Streamlining.” Cronin reflected on the complicated nature of consolidating units of government. Resistance from local government leaders and employees remains a major hurdle, he said. But support is growing among government reform groups, local leaders and members of the Illinois General Assembly, as evidenced by the nearly two dozen bills addressing streamlining in some fashion that have been considered by the legislature this session.

Cronin and Shaw also touched on the increasingly partisan tension between Republicans and Democrats in state government and the debate over school funding.

Shaw also asked what’s next politically for Cronin: Right now, he’s focused on his job, but Cronin added, “never say never.”
Oct. 26, 2016  
Union League Club of Chicago

Though the office of city treasurer is not as high-profile as others, the treasurer still is given significant responsibility and has great potential to benefit Chicago communities. On October 26, the Better Government Association hosted Chicago Treasurer Kurt Summers for a Candid Conversation with Andy Shaw, and they spoke about the activities of his office thus far.

Upon taking office, Summers undertook a major initiative to pool the costs of investment counseling firms for the various pension funds in order to reap savings. Through these arrangements, according to Summers they have “an ability to save $25-50 million a year… $1-2 billion over the life of the plans.” So far, eight out of the 11 funds have signed on, and several million in savings have been actualized even without all the plans signed on.

Summers also has required banks to disclose where they’re lending. He worked with the City Council on a Municipal Depository ordinance, which gave the treasurer’s office more leverage over the banks to invest in local communities. As he sees it, it’s the people’s money, and that money should be leveraged to benefit the people.

Summers spoke of how this year alone they generated $100 million from the portfolio their office manages, doubling the amount generated last year. In his words, that’s "less money we would have to get from taxes… more money for [the people].”

Under Summers, the treasurer’s office offered its support to a lawsuit which alleges major banks are engaging in collusion, anti-competitive behavior and rigging the markets to cost taxpayers money on their investments. According to Summers, the banks “closed out anyone else who wanted to be in the market. If the market was poised to move against them, they could control that, and no one would know.” Summers’ view is that this is criminal activity worthy of being investigated by the Department of Justice. Although the police and Chicago Teachers pension funds have joined in the suit, the City of Chicago has not yet done so.
Nov. 30, 2016
Illinois REALTORS, Springfield

With the election season behind us and chronic fiscal challenges before us, BGA President and CEO Andy Shaw sat down with the state’s two chief fiscal officers for a BGA Candid Conversation. State Treasurer Michael Frerichs and then-Comptroller-elect Susana Mendoza spoke before an audience of about 90 people at the Illinois REALTORS.

While both officers agreed that the political fog shrouding Springfield may not, at the moment, show signs of lifting, each offered hope for how they can communicate and work together to keep Illinois’ tax dollars flowing. Illinois is missing out on millions of dollars, Frerichs said, without a state operating budget in place.

He emphasized the need to invest directly in Illinois through revenue-generating programs, such as Ag Invest, which seeks to lower the cost of improving farms and expanding agriculture businesses through low-interest loans to farmers. His office also utilizes an Illinois Growth and Innovation Fund that invests up to 2 percent of the state’s assets into Illinois-based technology companies.

Comptroller-elect Mendoza drew on her experience as Chicago City Clerk to ensure a sense of fiscal and political independence in the office and to focus on the long-term financial impact on peoples’ lives. The former six-term state representative said she understands that local economies throughout the state count on a budget to sustain small businesses and state universities, which she called the lifeblood of many of communities.

Using conversations with voters during her campaign season as motivation, the comptroller-elect said she is determined to inject a resourceful, fresh voice into the political gridlock.

Mendoza said she will look at all options at her disposal to help find a budget solution, including using her newfound power as keeper of the state’s financial accounts to explore court orders and lawsuits currently dictating state spending. She also said she would continue former Comptroller Leslie Munger’s practice of not paying state legislators until a state budget is in place as part of a “shared sacrifice.”
BGA EVENTS

The BGA hosted three fundraising events this year. In the spring we honored the Midwest’s best government-related investigative reporting with the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation Awards for Investigative Reporting. And in the fall we celebrated another year of BGA progress with a Chicago luncheon for hundreds of guests plus our first-ever Springfield luncheon.
May 16, 2016
Union League Club of Chicago

Special Guests
The Boston Globe Spotlight Team, subject of the Academy Award-winner for Best Picture, “Spotlight”

Walter V. Robinson
Played by Michael Keaton
Sacha Pfeiffer
Played by Rachel McAdams
Michael Rezendes
Played by Mark Ruffalo

Winners
First Place - $10,000
“Sixteen Shots”
Slate, Jamie Kalven, Chicago

Second Place - $5,000
“Violation of Trust”
Belleville News-Democrat, George Pawlaczyk and Beth Hundsdorfer, Belleville, IL

Third Place - $3,000
“Inside IPRA”
WBEZ, Chip Mitchell and Derek John, Chicago
Events | Annual Luncheon: Elections Matter

Sept. 13, 2016
Sheraton Chicago

Featured Speaker:
Chuck Todd NBC News

WatchdogHonoree:
Daniel L. Goodwin

BGA President and CEO Andy Shaw welcomed a crowd of 800 to our Annual Luncheon on Sept. 13 with a message that stressed the importance of increased citizen participation in elections—one of the keys to good government. He talked about election reforms that can increase voter registration and turnout, and offered an overview of the BGA’s watchdog work, including the 22 BGA-backed good government bills approved by the state legislature this year. But he emphasized that there is still a lot more work to be done, especially on election reform, because the Independent Map Amendment was struck down by the Illinois Supreme Court and Automatic Voter Registration was vetoed by Gov. Rauner.

BGA Board Chair Mark Rust honored Daniel L. Goodwin, chairman & CEO of The Inland Real Estate Group of Companies, Inc., with the annual BGA Watchdog Award. Goodwin was recognized for his lifetime contributions to economic development, philanthropy and civic engagement. As chairman of the DuPage Airport Authority, he led the push to reform a corrupt and inefficient public airport.

After lunch, Shaw turned the tables by interviewing NBC political director Chuck Todd, who has moderated Meet the Press since 2014. He has a daily show on MSNBC and serves as on-air political analyst for TODAY and Nightly News with Lester Holt.

Todd discussed the shifting and unpredictable media landscape in this presidential campaign season, the importance of the upcoming debates, and the challenges facing Trump and Clinton. Ultimately, he said, whoever wins—he calls Clinton a slight favorite at this point—will have a hard time governing and uniting a divided and polarized country. But he offered a message of hope—Millennials—at least the ones who haven’t given up on government and public service.
In the midst of a chaotic, surreal campaign season and one day following the first presidential debate, civility and public discourse set the tone for the conversation between two political titans at the BGA’s Springfield luncheon.

Featured guests former Governor Jim Edgar, a Republican, and former University of Illinois Board Chair Chris Kennedy, a Democrat and potential gubernatorial candidate in 2018, offered a breakdown of the current state of politics in Illinois and the nation. From the race for the White House to reform here at home, they analyzed it all in a conversation with Andy Shaw, BGA President and CEO, before an audience of about 185 in Springfield’s President Abraham Lincoln Doubletree hotel.

The thought-provoking examination by both Edgar and Kennedy found common ground on a range of issues, including that neither would vote for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump. But, speaking directly to the Springfield audience, Kennedy said the well-informed, engaged individuals who represent the “establishment” of both political parties need to listen to those who are disengaged and “raging.”

“The American dream of rising from rags to riches was the promise of our country—the place where anyone could make it,” Kennedy said. “And people don’t believe that anymore. They’re upset. They’re angry. And they’re willing to destroy everything we have if we don’t fix that. That’s the message of this election.”
INCOME: $4.2 MILLION
- Events: 38%
- Major Donors: 31%
- Foundations: 15%
- Other: 13%
- Individual: 3%

EXPENSES: $3.7 MILLION
- Investigations: 42%
- Communications & Media: 21%
- Fundraising: 14%
- Policy: 13%
- Administration: 7%
- Civic Engagement: 3%
## Staff and Interns

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  - President and CEO

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  - Director of Development and External Relations

- **Solomon Lieberman**
  - Director of Digital Strategy

- **Bob Secter**
  - Director of Investigations

- **Ernest Crowder**
  - Director of Administration

**2016 INTERNS**

- **Jose Sanchez**
- **Andrew Schroedter**
- **Stephanie Hardiman**
- **Simon**
- **Judy Stevens**
- **Casey Toner**
- **Kadeja Tyler**

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- Madison Hopkins
- Nikki Justiniani
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- Lia Landor
- Doug Longhini
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The Chicago Community Trust  
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