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BGR MEDIA RELEASE

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BGR wins national award for role in contracting reform

The Bureau of Governmental Research's work to reform professional services contracting in New Orleans has won the award for Outstanding Policy Achievement at the Government Research Association (GRA) national conference in Chicago. GRA, the national organization for governmental research professionals, recognized BGR's efforts for laying the groundwork for comprehensive reforms executed by the Landrieu administration.

In March 2010, BGR published *Contracting with Confidence: Professional Services Contracting Reform in New Orleans*. The report presented a model for professional services contracting drawn from BGR's research on best practices. The model called for the creation of a centralized procurement office, the creation of a competitive, rational and transparent decision-making process, a very limited role for elected officials, oversight from the city's independent inspector general, and mechanisms to monitor the performance of approved contracts.

Shortly after taking office, the Mayor signed an executive order incorporating all of BGR's major recommendations. Contract proposals are now reviewed in the light of day by a committee of city officials, and the mayor's involvement has been limited significantly, with contract selections now tied to the committee's scoring of each proposal on the basis

of clearly-defined criteria. All meetings of the selection committee are open to the public, and the committee's evaluations of proposals are available for public review. The city now facilitates oversight of this process by the Office of Inspector General. In addition, it has hired a professional procurement officer to head the newly centralized procurement office. While that office is still ramping up, the reforms have resulted in a more transparent and rational process for awarding professional services contracts.

"We are pleased to receive this recognition from our peers around the nation," BGR Chairman Sterling Scott Willis said. "The honor extends to the city's administration as well for its commitment to contracting reform. We look forward to continuous progress in this important area."

BGR's report is available at www.bgr.org/reports/Contracting-Reform-in-New-Orleans/.

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BGR is a private, nonprofit, independent research organization. Since its founding in 1932, it has been dedicated to informed public policy-making and the effective use of public resources in the New Orleans area. For more information call Janet Howard at 504-525-4152 or visit BGR's website, www.bgr.org.