



THE BUREAU OF GOVERNMENTAL RESEARCH  
**IMPACT REPORT** 2019



# OUR ORGANIZATION

The Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) is a private, nonprofit, independent research organization dedicated to informed public policy making and the effective use of public resources for the improvement of government in the New Orleans metropolitan area.

**To achieve this mission,** we produce public policy reports, monitor local government and host public events that connect citizens to policymakers. We also work toward outcomes that improve the efficiency, effectiveness, accountability and transparency of local government.

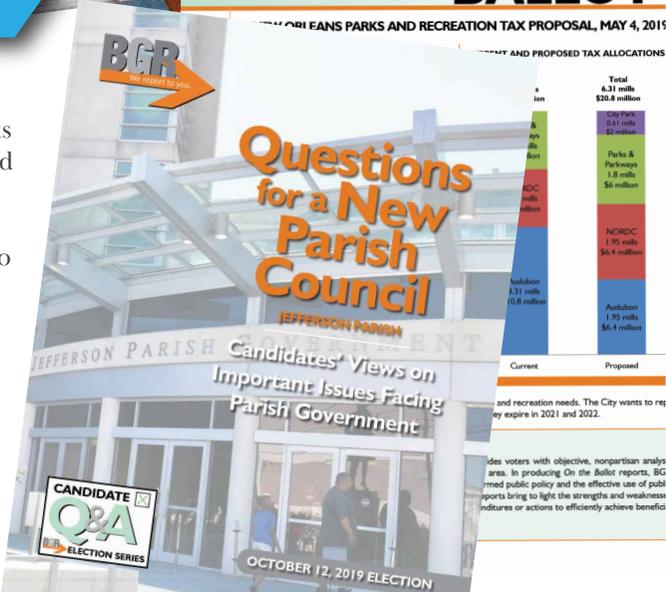
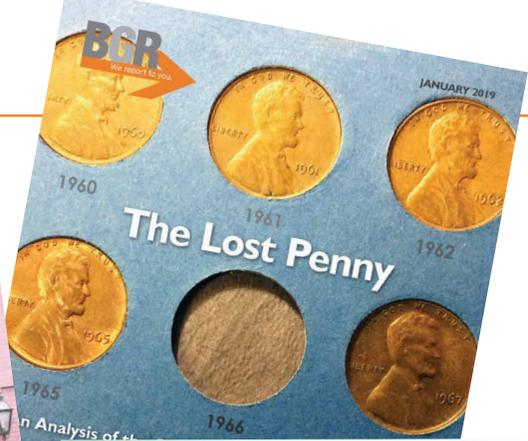
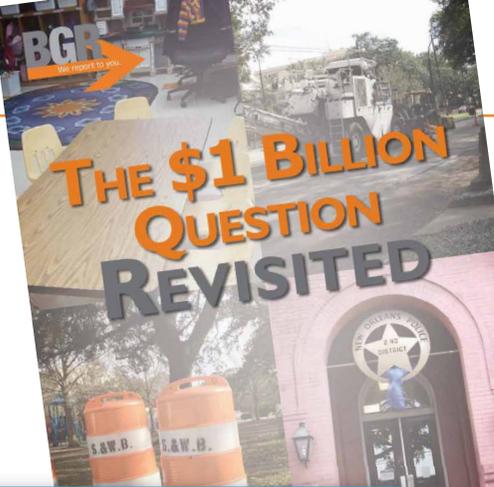
**BGR transcends administrations and politics.** We are an objective voice on local public policy issues. We are governed by citizens and not part of, or controlled by, any government body. Our financial support comes from a mix of individuals, businesses and foundations.

**BGR is focused on the future.** In January 2018, BGR's Board of Directors completed a strategic planning process and adopted five vision statements to guide organizational behaviors and chart the course for excellence in the coming years.



# OUR WORK

Objective, nonpartisan public policy research is BGR's hallmark. Our reports uncover facts, frame issues, recommend solutions, and lay the groundwork for critical government reform initiatives. We also monitor government entities to stay abreast of current public policy issues, identify new issues, and understand the dynamics that affect decision-making by public officials. For 2019, we published 13 new reports and monitored more than 70 government entities in the New Orleans metropolitan area, as well as the Louisiana Legislature.



In 2019, BGR was once again recognized by the Governmental Research Association, a consortium of our national peers, for excellence in governmental research in the general interest.



**OUTSTANDING  
POLICY ACHIEVEMENT  
AWARD**

*Improving a Tax Proposal for Jefferson Parish Public Schools – On the Ballot reports for the November 18, 2017 and May 4, 2019 elections*

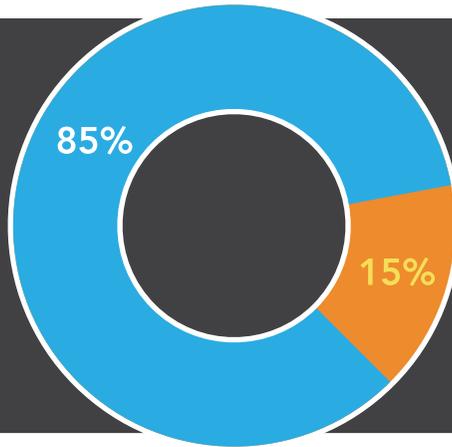
**MOST  
DISTINGUISHED  
RESEARCH AWARD**

*The Lost Penny:  
An Analysis of the Orleans Parish  
Hotel Tax Structure*

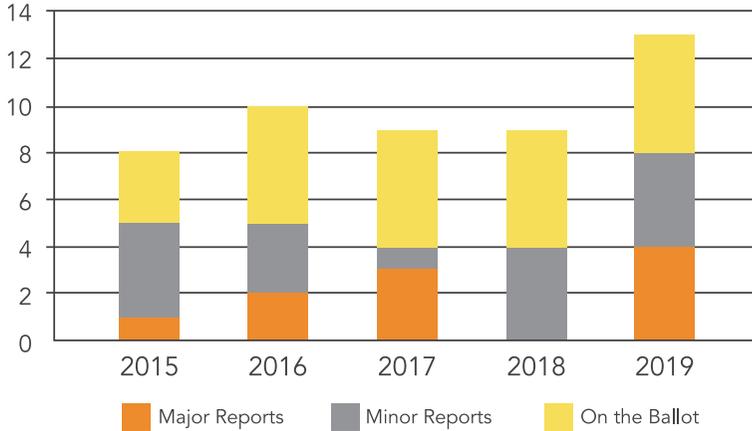
# INFORMING OUTCOMES

## BGR'S ON THE BALLOT POSITIONS 2014-2019

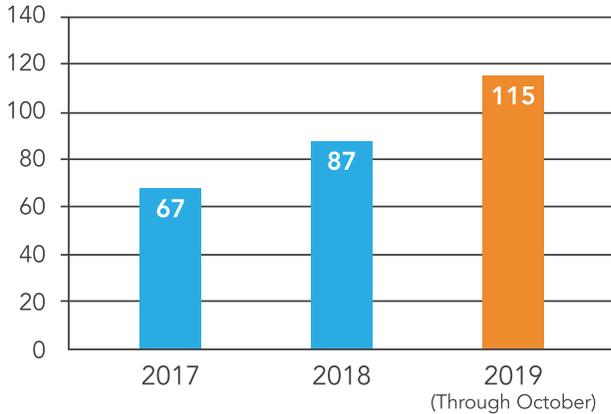
- Successful Positions
- Unsuccessful Positions



## ANNUAL PUBLICATIONS



## BGR NEWS MEDIA CITATIONS



# MAKING AN IMPACT



**THE LOST PENNY.** BGR's report *The Lost Penny* resulted in the restoration of New Orleans' suspended 1% hotel tax in 2019, which should yield \$12.3M annually dedicated to infrastructure needs.



**A PLAN FOR REDUCED BORROWING COSTS.** BGR's monitoring of the City of New Orleans found that it has not been issuing tax-exempt bonds, which results in higher borrowing costs for the City. In response to a 2019 BGR letter raising concerns about this inefficiency, City officials committed to developing a strategy to qualify for tax-exempt status.



**HOTEL PROJECT SCRUTINY.** In 2018 and 2019, BGR's monitoring brought attention to the New Orleans Convention Center's aggressive timeline



for finalizing a deal with private developers seeking \$330M in tax rebates, exemptions, and other public contributions to build a large convention hotel. BGR's work fostered an essential public dialogue.



**BETTER SCHOOL TAX.** The Jefferson Parish Public School System used BGR's 2017 criticism of a proposed pay raise tax to craft a more strategic, cost-effective proposal in 2019, which won voter support.



**BUDGET TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.** BGR elevated concerns in 2018 about the lack of budgeting transparency for the St. Tammany Parish Justice Center Complex. The Parish responded by adding a consolidated summary of revenues and expenditures for all Justice Center funds to its budget.



**BETTER USE OF TAX REVENUE.** In 2016 and 2017, BGR found some departments of Jefferson



Parish Government had accumulated large reserves from dedicated taxes. In response, the Jefferson Parish Council formed an advisory committee to review the Parish's dedicated taxes, and recommended several improvements to capital planning.



**PENSION REFORM.** BGR's pension report series (2012-2016) led to expected cost savings of \$1M annually due to BGR's discovery of a misinterpreted pension benefit formula for New Orleans firefighters. The City also restructured benefits for new employees.



**PUBLIC SCHOOL REVENUE.** Monitoring the Orleans Parish School Board allowed BGR to bring attention to \$40M in local tax revenue that the school board was accumulating in a deferred revenue account rather than distributing to the schools. The tax revenue was then distributed among all public schools in Orleans Parish.

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