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## **BGR MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **National Association Honors BGR's Research and Property Tax Dashboards**

The Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) won three awards from its peer organizations in the [Governmental Research Association](#) (GRA) at its national conference July 21-23 in Asheville, N.C.

BGR's 2023 report calling for governance reforms for the Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (SWBNO) won the **Most Distinguished Research Award for a Local Government Issue**. The report, [\*Waterworks in Progress: Reassessing the Sewerage & Water Board's Governance Problems and Potential Paths to Long-Term Improvement\*](#), revealed the complex web of laws and policies that guide decision making for the utility. BGR showed how problems with the governance structure weaken its finances, its coordination with the City of New Orleans, and public accountability for both entities. The report called for a mayor-led study of two long-term reform options: (1) strengthening the SWBNO as a stand-alone utility that operates separately from City government or (2) replacing it with a municipal utility that functions as part of City government. BGR also recommended several near-term solutions to improve financial sustainability, drainage system performance and SWBNO-City coordination, regardless of which reform option is ultimately chosen. Former BGR Research Analyst Jamie Parker led the research for this report.

In addition, BGR won two awards for communications. BGR Senior Research Analyst Susie Dudis led the research for both projects.

The association honored BGR's [Property Tax Dashboards](#) with a **Certificate of Merit for Best Digital Communication**. The dashboards are an interactive, online tool for residents and businesses in Jefferson, Orleans and St. Tammany parishes to better understand their property tax rates, where the money goes, when each tax sunsets and how rates have changed over time. BGR accompanied the Property Tax Dashboards [online](#)

[guide to property taxes in Louisiana](#), which explains how tax bills are calculated and how rates are set.

BGR's [letter on strengthening the City of New Orleans' primary financial reserve](#) won a **Certificate of Merit for Best Short-Form Writing**. In May 2023, as the New Orleans City Council was poised to appropriate \$73 million from the reserve, called the General Fund balance, BGR asked the mayor and the council to improve planning and public reporting for this important resource. BGR's letter called for a comprehensive plan for fund balance use and preservation through 2025. It also called for the creation of a regularly updated public dashboard of General Fund balance activity. The City has since launched [an online dashboard](#) for General Fund balance projects and appropriations.

The GRA was established in 1914 as the national organization for governmental research professionals, and it has presented BGR with 51 awards since 1992. These awards have recognized BGR's distinguished research, effective citizen education, distinguished service, research presentation and policy achievements. This is the 17th year in a row that the GRA has recognized BGR's work.

"These awards recognize BGR's high-quality research and efforts to communicate important public policy issues to the public," said BGR President and CEO Rebecca Mowbray. "We thank the GRA and its member organizations nationwide for honoring our work, and BGR remains focused on improving government in the New Orleans area."

The reports are available on BGR's website, [bgr.org](http://bgr.org).

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*BGR is a private, nonprofit, independent research organization. Since its founding in 1932, it has been dedicated to informed public policymaking and the effective use of public resources in the Greater New Orleans area. For more information, call (504) 525-4152 or visit BGR's website, [bgr.org](http://bgr.org).*

*BGR is a proud member of the [Governmental Research Association](#), the national organization for governmental research professionals. The GRA began in 1914, with the realization that effective policymaking requires good information, not just good intention. The GRA is home to independent organizations providing this information — trusted, objective, non-partisan, and practical research and data to local and state leaders.*