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BGR MEDIA RELEASE

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National Association Honors BGR Policy Reports and Career Achievements of Retired CEO Janet Howard

The [Governmental Research Association](#) (GRA) honored the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR) with two research awards at its virtual national conference July 19-21. The GRA also recognized the career achievements of BGR's retired president and CEO Janet Howard, who led the organization from 2001 to 2015.

In a competition that spanned two years due to the pandemic-related cancellation of the 2020 conference, BGR received the **Best COVID-19 Response Award (Local Government)** for its collection of work to hold local government entities accountable for their fiscal stewardship during the pandemic. In times of crisis, public officials tend to place a premium on acting quickly – often for good reasons – to develop and implement solutions. However, this can result in policy decisions that are not thoroughly vetted to ensure the most efficient and effective use of public resources. To guard against this, BGR repeatedly mobilized its research team throughout the pandemic to expediently analyze complex financial issues and provide guidance to both policymakers and the public in a timely fashion. This work included:

- [*Handle with Care: Public Planning and Accountability Must Guide Spending of Federal Relief Funds*](#) (June 2021), which urges the City of New Orleans (City) and other Louisiana governments to take a deliberate, strategic approach to deploying billions of dollars in federal American Rescue Plan funds.
- [*PolicyWatch: New Orleans Budget and Tax Updates*](#) (May 2020), which assessed the potential risks of the City's proposal at that time to borrow up to \$100 million to offset pandemic-related revenue shortfalls.
- [*On the Ballot: New Orleans Property Tax Propositions, December 5, 2020*](#), which identified problems with the City's unsuccessful ballot proposal to extend and rededicate several property taxes in the midst of the pandemic, more than a year before they were set to expire.

- [Conventional Wisdom: Pausing the Convention Hotel Deal to Assess the Pandemic's Impact and Reduce Public Costs](#) (April 2020), which raised concerns about proceeding with a tentative, pre-pandemic deal to provide nearly \$800 million in public contributions for a proposed convention hotel.
- [The Orleans Parish School Board's fall 2020 policy changes](#) to improve financial accountability and sustainability in response to BGR's recommendations from its comprehensive report on school funding discussed below.

BGR also received the **Most Distinguished Research Award (Local Government)** for its 2020 report [Learning Curve: A Guide to Navigating School Funding in New Orleans' Unified District](#). Funded by a generous grant from The Helis Foundation, the report serves as a guide for policymakers, charter school administrators and board members, education advocates, interested parents and other members of the public who must grasp the complete funding picture in order to develop and promote effective changes in New Orleans' unique school system. It details more than \$650 million in K-12 public education revenue from local, state, federal and other sources, and highlights areas for improvement.

Finally, the GRA honored **Janet Howard** with the Frederick P. Gruenberg Award for her career contributions to governmental research, improvements to government, effective communications to the public and officials, and support of the GRA and mentoring of younger GRA members. The association commended Ms. Howard's leadership and commitment to excellence. During her tenure, BGR's research informed key decisions, from avoiding a problematic [privatization](#) of Sewerage and Water Board operations before Hurricane Katrina to several key government reforms as the city recovered from the disaster. These included [consolidating New Orleans' seven assessors](#) into one parishwide office, passing a [master land use plan](#) with the force of law, strengthening [public school financial management](#), reducing politics in [professional services contracting](#), and protecting post-Katrina reforms to the [governance of local levee systems](#). The GRA wrote in its presentation of the Gruenberg Award to Ms. Howard: "Your commitment to the highest standard of research and accuracy not only shaped a generation of BGR researchers, but also garnered many GRA Awards for excellence in research and policy achievements from your GRA peers."

BGR President & CEO **Amy Glovinsky** thanked the GRA for honoring BGR's research and Ms. Howard's achievements. "These awards recognize BGR's persistent, diligent work, over many years, to deliver high-quality, independent public policy research to citizens and policymakers in our community." Ms. Glovinsky said. "We stand committed to building on this tradition of excellence for years to come."

The GRA was established in 1914 as the national organization for governmental research professionals, and it has presented BGR with more than 40 awards throughout its history. These awards have recognized BGR's distinguished research, effective citizen education, distinguished service, research presentation and policy achievements. This is the 14th consecutive award competition in which the GRA has recognized BGR's work.

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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 Greater New Orleans area. For more information, call (504) 525-4152 or visit BGR's website, www.bgr.org.