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BGR MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release – April 12, 2006

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Challenge for Mayoral Candidates: Professional Services Contracting Reform

Today the Bureau of Governmental Research is releasing *Challenge for Mayoral Candidates: Professional Services Contracting*. The report lays out a model for creating fairness, objectivity, and efficiency in contracting for professional services. In addition, it contains a pledge for mayoral candidates to sign, promising that they will implement the model within 90 days of taking office.

The centerpiece of BGR's model limits the role of elected officials in the process of awarding professional services contracts with the city. Based on procedures used for many years by the State of Louisiana and the City of Baton Rouge for the selection of architects and engineers, BGR's plan would set up independent selection committees for all professional services contracts. The majority of the members on each committee would be professionals chosen by relevant professional organizations.

“This is a great opportunity for mayoral candidates to embrace meaningful reform,” said BGR Chairman David Guidry. “Implementing the BGR Model will create a fair, objective selection process designed to serve our citizens.”

To focus public discussion and encourage change, BGR has presented its Professional Services Contracting Model to the mayoral candidates and called upon them to pledge to implement it. The model and the pledge are specific, allowing voters to hold the candidate accountable, should he or she become mayor. The pledge commits candidates to issue an executive order and to take all the steps necessary to implement the BGR Model within 90 days of taking office.

The basic elements of BGR's Professional Services Contracting Model are:

Depoliticize the selection process

- Create term-limited selection committees with a majority of members chosen by relevant professional organizations.
- Submit contracts negotiated by the city staff to the mayor for signature or rejection, with a written explanation required if the mayor rejects a contract.

Actively promote competition

- Maximize the pool of competitors by advertising and conducting outreach programs.
- Re-advertise any contract that fails to receive at least three responsive proposals.

Conduct a fair, open, and transparent process

- Establish and follow a set of comprehensive written procedures for all contracts.
- Use standardized Requests for Qualifications and Requests for Proposals (including goals for participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises).
- Establish an objective proposal evaluation system that includes the use of detailed criteria, weights and grading.
- Document all aspects of the contract evaluation and selection process.
- Conduct every meeting involving evaluation of proposals and selection of contractors as an open meeting.
- Establish an expedited appeals process.

Ensure accountability

- Monitor contractor performance and create and maintain written evaluations.

Enforce the rules

- Give the force of law to the process described above.
- Activate the Ethics Review Board.

Copies of BGR's Professional Services Contracting Model and the pledge presented to mayoral candidates will be available on BGR's web site at www.bgr.org. As candidates sign, their names will be posted on our web site.

BGR is a private, non-profit, 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. BGR also addresses state and national public policy issues that affect the metropolitan area.

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