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ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE RECEIVES ETHICS AWARD FOR COMMITMENT TO OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNMENT

Chicago — Citing the office's leadership and commitment to ethics reform in Illinois, the Illinois Executive Ethics Commission (EEC) presented the Attorney General's Office with the Abraham Lincoln Ethics Award during its conference this week in Springfield. Attorney General Lisa Madigan accepted the award for the office.

Created by the EEC in 2006, the award is bestowed each year to a State employee or entity that, according to the Commission, demonstrates a record of exemplary adherence to the principles of integrity, fairness and service to the people of the State of Illinois.

"I am proud to accept this honor on behalf of the employees in my office who are dedicated to serving the people of Illinois and upholding the ethics and open government laws," said Attorney General Madigan.

In his award citation, Executive Ethics Commission Chair James Faught said, "We believe that the consistency and professionalism with which the Office has conducted its work, particularly in the area of ethics, makes a profound difference in the ethical climate in this State."

Faught said that in 2009, Madigan's office, working closely with the EEC, spearheaded an overhaul of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act that raised ethical standards for State officers and employees and significantly increased transparency in State government.

The new law resulting from the joint effort of the Attorney General's Office and the EEC strengthens the state's ethics standards and the ability to enforce those standards in several critical ways. Among many significant provisions, the new law:

- Tightens the revolving door prohibition to prevent state officials and employees from using their government positions to lobby for new jobs with state contractors or businesses regulated by the government;
- Adds transparency and accountability to the ethics law enforcement process by requiring public disclosure of Inspector General reports of misconduct;
- Increases the penalties for violating the Ethics Act; and
- Empowers Inspectors General to investigate misconduct in state hiring.

In 2009, Attorney General Madigan also led the successful effort to rewrite the Illinois Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and enhance the enforcement of both FOIA and the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Madigan's efforts, working with legislators, a coalition of open government advocates and the Illinois Reform Commission, resulted in a new law that closes loopholes in FOIA and makes it and OMA easier to enforce by codifying the position of Public Access Counselor within the Attorney General's office to assist people seeking access to government documents and meetings.

The new law also requires government officials to receive training on compliance with FOIA and OMA. And it authorizes the Attorney General's Office, through the Public Access Counselor, to issue binding opinions to resolve disputes over FOIA requests or Open Meetings Act issues. Prior to enacting the new law, members of the public who were denied access to public records or meetings had no recourse other than going to court.

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