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**ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN ANNOUNCES NEW ACTING PUBLIC ACCESS COUNSELOR**

Chicago—Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced she has appointed Amalia Rioja as Acting Public Access Counselor to succeed outgoing Deputy Chief of Staff and Public Access Counselor Cara Smith, who recently was named Chief of Staff for the Illinois Department of Corrections.

As the Acting Public Access Counselor, Rioja will oversee 11 dedicated Assistant Attorneys General and six support staff members who work in the Attorney General's Public Access Bureau while the Office of the Attorney General conducts a search for a permanent PAC.

Rioja has served as Chief Deputy Public Access Counselor since the amended Freedom of Information Act went into effect Jan. 1, 2010, and, prior to that, worked as an Assistant Attorney General on policy issues. Previously, Rioja worked in the Illinois Comptroller's office as Deputy General Counsel and as its FOIA officer. Rioja also worked for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. She is a graduate of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and Northwestern University School of Law.

Attorney General Madigan, lawmakers and other open government advocates revamped the state's open government laws in 2009 to bring about long overdue transparency and openness to government operations in Illinois. In the year since the new laws went into effect, Madigan said more than 5,200 new matters were submitted to her Public Access Bureau by the public and the media, demonstrating the need for strong, enforceable open government laws. The overwhelming majority of the requests and inquiries came from members of the public, showing that Illinois' sunshine laws continue to be used most by the general public rather than the media.

Further information and educational materials on the Freedom of Information Act and the Open Meetings Act can be found at Attorney General Madigan's website, [www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov). Anyone seeking assistance from the Public Access Bureau can contact its hotline at 1-877-299-FOIA (3642) or send an email to [publicaccess@atg.state.il.us](mailto:publicaccess@atg.state.il.us).

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