



ACCOUNTABILITY BEGINS WITH ENLIGHTENMENT

Bill Grace, the Center for Ethical Leadership

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the
Accountability
issue

In the public sector, we encounter a lot of talk about accountability. But what exactly do we mean by this? What are we accountable for, and to whom?

Accountability suggests that leaders act in relationship. How leaders define the breadth, depth and scope of that relationship is what makes for *enlightened* or *unenlightened* accountability.

Elected officials feel a special sense of accountability to the constituents whose support put them in office. While accountability to constituents is natural and wise, enlightened accountability may call for a broader view. *Accountability* in its best and noblest sense asks leaders to account to constituents, but also to their conscience and to the common good.

Wise leaders attend to the demands of conscience. For even as they represent the voice of the people, they also give ear to the inner call of their own integrity. Can our leaders truly represent the interests of others if they are unwilling to take a stand on their own highest ground? Enlightened accountability begins with honoring our core values and the demands of conscience.

Enlightened leaders know they are also accountable to the common good, which requires leadership in two ways. First, the common good holds leaders accountable to establish liberty and justice for all. Simple enough. But the second part of leadership for the common good requires that leaders offer additional accountability to the least fortunate and the most vulnerable.

In the first case, leaders are invited to imagine liberty and justice as a campfire. Some members of our community are gathered around the fire enjoying in its warmth and light. Others, uninvited by tradition, bias and narrow-mindedness, wait and suffer in the cold darkness.

Everyone in elected office and all citizens must consider who is left outside the circle and invite them into its warmth and light. Enlightened leaders will hold themselves accountable to the faces and voices that are easily overlooked and unheard.

Today, accountability seems more crucial than ever, as failures of integrity in corporate, government and religious institutions have made for rough public waters and a climate of caution and mistrust. What can leaders and those they lead do to re-establish trust in our public and private institutions?

I believe the first step is for "the people" to hold leaders accountable to the right things. First, we should not hold leaders accountable to *control* the future. Anticipate it, plan

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Dr. Bill Grace is the founder and Executive Director of the Center for Ethical Leadership. A recipient of the 1998 Evergreen Award for outstanding contributions to Washington state, Dr. Grace holds an M.S. from Oregon State University and a Ph.D. from Iowa State University. His volunteer involvement has included leadership roles in the Church Council of Greater Seattle, the Washington Commission for Service Learning, and the Washington State Office of Volunteerism.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE CHAIR

Putnam Barber

Elected officials will tell you that they're "accountable at the polls on election day." The Municipal League works to make sure that's true through the candidate evaluation process. The League's Candidate Evaluation Committees look at candidates countywide, seeking the strengths they will bring into leadership roles, if elected. Then we sum everything up in published ratings—from "Outstanding" (the one we love to give), to "Not Qualified" for people whose record suggests they would be unable to do the job.

Much that affects the strength of our communities happens between elections, though. Even the best elected officials can miss things that deserve greater attention. The Muni League presses for accountability all year round. Our volunteers scan issues of possible civic concern, hold informal conversations with officials and others, then – sometimes – recommend to the Board that further study is undertaken. For example, committees are now working on exploring available opportunities for the Port of Seattle and finding ways to improve coordination among central Puget Sound governments. These efforts are all aimed to support and champion the cause of civic accountability in King County communities.

Accountability has its rewards, and through our Civic Awards, the Municipal League gives recognition to citizens, elected officials and others who have made outstanding contributions to our quality of life. Nominations are currently invited for the 2004 awards, to be presented May 27 at a luncheon ceremony.

If you would like to volunteer for the Candidate Evaluation Committee or the Civic Awards, leave a message at the League office at 206-622-8333 or send an email to muni@munileague.org.

Remember, it's your Municipal League. If you have ideas about our work, we want to hear from you. You can e-mail me directly at chair@munileague.org or call the office.

MOLDOVAN MAYORS MARVEL AT MUNI LEAGUE

Lonnie Lusardo

On March 4, former Municipal League Trustee Lonnie Lusardo represented the League to 12 mayors from municipalities in Moldova. In addition to getting a review of the League's most recent studies, the Moldovans learned about our candidate evaluation process and commitment to civic issues.

The mayors were fascinated to hear that members of all political parties – many with opposing points of view – worked together effectively. They were also surprised to learn that the League operates with no paid staff, a very low budget, and volunteers who make a serious time commitment.

While the majority of their questions pertained to the candidate evaluation process, the Moldovans were impressed by the time commitment League members invest across all committees.

The group was interested in how the League's studies were able to include professional input with no paid consultants and to what extent those studies received public interest and support. The League's recent City Light study provided a strong example of how non-paid professional, legal and political voices guided the study's final recommendations that were later cited in numerous media reports—ultimately leading to a change of leadership at the utility.

By underscoring the League's attention to detail and accuracy in producing reports, the mayors understood that the public value of the League is based on our reputation as an objective, nonpartisan source of public scrutiny.



"Much that affects the strength of our communities happens between elections... The Muni League presses for accountability all year round."

Do you have a story idea for a future edition of **muni**news? Want to comment on an article you read in this issue? Send your comments and suggestions to muni@munileague.org.

ENLIGHTENED ACCOUNTABILITY

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for it, and seek to influence it, yes. Stuff happens. Fickle investors turn boom into bust, and fickle electorates want change as long as it doesn't cost too much. And in a world where the only absolute is unpredictability, let's not ask leaders to be accountable for the impossible.

So, to what can we hold leaders accountable? I think there are three vital behaviors to which we must hold all leaders accountable:

- ♦ Telling the truth
- ♦ Asking good questions that engage the people
- ♦ Pointing toward hope

Unenlightened leaders would keep the truth from the people. This behavior is the root of all that is worst in leadership. When we deceive the people or mistrust their ability to handle the truth, we weaken democracy itself.

Today's problems are so complex that leaders may not be able to create solutions easily. Today we need to establish a climate of mutual accountability. Leaders can do that by attending to the second vital behavior: asking good questions that engage the people.

Harry Boyle says Americans have become better customers than citizens. As enlightened citizens, we are challenged to see ourselves as accountable members of a complex household. As members-all, we certainly have rights. But we also have responsibilities.

In this era of self-interest, it is easy to believe our duty is done by

telling leaders what we want from them. However, government by *the people* makes all of us accountable—especially to those left outside the campfire of liberty and justice, or the circle of mercy and compassion. We are all stewards of the common good. No one is exempt from tending the campfire or widening the circle.

The final behavior to which we must hold leaders accountable is pointing toward hope. Accountable leaders move away from quarrelsome and ego-bound nay-saying. Plenty of people tell us what *won't* work. We need more leaders to tell us what *will*, thereby calling us to possibility and hope, and, in turn, holding us accountable for compassionate action. They will ask us to lay aside cynicism for creative engagement, apathy for compassion, and privilege for duty.

So let our accountability be mutual, let it be deeply internal and let it be broadly informed by the common good.

Finally, I would offer this humble bit of advice for anyone in public office: Today you'll most likely face a difficult decision. If you choose "solution X," you'll face staunch criticism. On the other hand, if you choose "solution Y," you'll be just as harshly criticized, but by a different group of people. If, on the other hand, you employ all-inclusive democratic processes, infused with the latest in chaos and complexity theory, to arrive at the incontrovertible "solution Z," you will STILL be criticized—this time by an entirely new third group who didn't even weigh in on solutions X or Y!

So my advice is this: Do the right thing, and get criticized for that. That's the one you can go home and get some sleep on.

The *Muni League Forum* debuted on King County Civic Television (CTV) with "A Crystal Ball on 2004," predictions on local civic affairs from historian Walt Crowley and Deb Eddy of the Suburban Cities Association. This month's show is titled "The Regional Neighborhood," an exploration of the governance challenges facing the Puget Sound region with Bellevue Mayor Connie Marshall and James Veseley of *The Seattle Times*. Hosted by Muni League Vice-Chair Rita Brogan, the *Muni League Forum* can be seen on Channel 22 throughout most areas of King County and on Channel 72 or 80 in Downtown Seattle and lower Queen Anne Hill. The show can also be accessed via the Municipal League website, www.munileague.org, or at www.metrokc.gov/ctv.



CEC For the past 93 years, Municipal League volunteers have rated candidates for public office according to four criteria: Involvement, Character, Effectiveness, and Knowledge. This is in contrast to other organizations, who rate or endorse based on political party, platform or position on issues. The League rates only to determine fitness for office. We neither endorse nor compare candidates to one another. This year, five committees will evaluate candidates throughout King County.

CEC Call the Muni League offices at 206-622-8333 or visit our website at www.munileague.org for a CEC volunteer application. If anyone you know is interested in participating, please pass this on—we encourage everyone to apply! High-quality, unbiased ratings depend on having the participation of people with diverse backgrounds and views.

NEW TRUSTEES AND OFFICERS FOR 2004

We are pleased to announce that our membership has elected five new and two returning trustees. Please welcome Vaughnnetta J. Barton, Paul B. Demitriades, Wendy Morgan, R. Todd Slind, and Rich White as new trustees in the class of 2004. We are also pleased that Jeff Ballaine and Philip Thompson are returning for another three-year term.

In January 2004, the board was presented with two additional trustees for consideration: Rashelle Tanner and Stephanie Cirkovich. And due to an oversight, our chair, Put Barber, was mistakenly left off the ballot as a returning trustee. All three were unanimously approved by the board of trustees.

At the January meeting, the board also elected this year's officers: Put Barber will serve as Muni League Chair for another year, working alongside Vice-Chair Rita Brogan, Secretary Beth Arman, and Treasurer Sandra Driscoll.

AWARDS INSPIRE INTEGRITY, INVOLVEMENT

Jessica Fleenor

I blame my parents, really. When I was a youngster my parents would take me with them to caucuses, voting booths, election night parties. (I remember attending a Muni League Election Watch party at the age of seven. Mondale lost.) They taught me to learn the issues when I vote, know what's going on in my community, and be involved.

I have taken this with me as an adult, volunteering on campaigns, for organizations, and serving on boards. I have a special fondness for volunteering for the Municipal League. I believe so deeply in what they do—from the candidate evaluations to the Civic Awards.

The Civic Awards celebrate people who have made a difference in public service, either professionally or as a community volunteer, and the Civic Awards luncheon is my favorite volunteer event. There are hundreds of critical details – from VIP protocol issues to making the room sparkle in time for the doors to open – but where else can you meet the people behind the scenes as well as the people out in front of King County's civic life? Every year I leave the event tired, and yet uplifted by the experience.

This is the fifth year that Jessica Fleenor has volunteered for the Municipal League Civic Awards. Jessica is currently working at Washington Mutual, and she stays active in civic issues.

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE DISCUSSION ON APRIL 20

The Municipal League, the Discovery Institute, the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, and the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce are embarking on a project that will dramatically alter the way we view our region's governmental bodies—and you are invited to be a part of this monumental change.

To help address our region-wide issues like transportation, economic development, and resource and growth management, these groups formed the *Regional Governance Project*, an organized effort to identify and fulfill the vision of effective government within and throughout our region. The project's vision is for all of Puget Sound – Snohomish, Pierce, Kitsap and King Counties – to be effectively governed on both a regional and local level. The project will examine the different facets of regional government, such as sufficient jurisdictional reach, taxing authority, jurisdictional overlap, optimized efficiency, elected leadership, and accountability.

You are invited to learn more about this exciting project by participating in a brown bag discussion at 12 p.m. on Tuesday, April 20 at the office of Davis Wright Tremaine, 1501 4th Avenue, 26th Floor (Seattle).

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

april

- 20: BROWN BAG DISCUSSION:
REGIONAL GOVERNANCE
1501 4th Avenue in Seattle
26th Floor Conference Room
12 p.m.

may

- 27: MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
CIVIC AWARDS
Westin Hotel
1900 Fifth Avenue in Seattle
noon to 1:30 p.m.

june

- TBD: Muni League Issues
Forum for Candidates

If you have a civic-minded event that you would like to include in the calendar, please send the event details to Stephanie Cirkovich at cirkovich@comcast.net with the words "Muni League" in the subject of your e-mail.

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE OF KING COUNTY MEMBERSHIP (Trustees in bold)

Richard Albrecht	Joanna Cullen	Victor E. Hugo	A. Talcott Ostrander	Elcena Steinmann
Tom Albro	Tom Curran	Chris Hurst	Philip Padelford	Alexander Stevens
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Kathleen Anderson	Scott Davis	Douglas Johnson	Frank Pattison	Harold S. Taniguchi
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Jim Austin	Oscar Desper	Bruce Jones	E. D. Peasley	Brian Thomas
Angela L. Avery	Kathy Detlofsen	Andee Jorgensen	Henry E. Perry	Joan K. Thomas
Jeffrey Ballaine	Thomas Ditty	Barbara P. Kaiser	Lillian Perry	David Thomley
A.S. Ballinger	Mary Donovan	Robert Kaplan	Barbara Peterson	David O. Thompson
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Putnam Barber	William Dunlap	Jennie Keith	Julie Peterson	Phillip A. Thompson
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Joy S. Barker	Susan A. Eisele	Jacqueline Kim	Jennifer M. Piccolo	Donald L. Thomson
Marky Barrett	Helen G. Eisenberg	Robert Klein	Kathleen Pierce	Dean D. Thornton
Vaughnetta J. Barton	Katherine Elias	Susan Kretz	Charles Pigott	David Towne
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Rita Brogan	Eleanor M. Hadley	Barbara J. Maurer	Joe Sakay	Rich White
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David Byers	Matt Hanbey	Richard E. Monroe	John A. Schwager	CORPORATE MEMBERS
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<http://www.munileague.org>

MUNICIPAL LEAGUE HAS LONG TRADITION OF MEMBERSHIP

Norma Jean Hanson

Thank you to all the new and renewing members who are supporting the efforts of the Municipal League. We appreciate your commitment to empowered citizens and informed choices.

Have you considered gifting a friend, a family member, a coworker, or a business associate with a League membership? For first-time memberships from your referral, you will receive a holographic/lenticular bookmark as a small token of our appreciation. For more information, please call the League office at 206-682-6333 and leave a message on the Membership line; a membership committee member will return your call promptly. You can also visit our website at www.munileague.org to renew your own membership. Give the gift of good government!

HELP WANTED

Seeking thoughtful, open-minded individuals to help evaluate ballot measures for the fall primary and general elections. Time commitment involved is approximately two meetings per ballot measure from July to October. Possible measures: Education Trust Fund; 1% sales tax; RTID transportation package. To serve on this important committee, call Kathy Elias at 206-325-1129 or Lucy Steers at 206-725-8691.



ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION...

Muni News is published by the Municipal League Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that works in conjunction with the Municipal League of King County to provide King County voters and citizens with the resources they need to make informed decisions about civic issues.

The Municipal League is nonpartisan and welcomes all points of view. If you have any question or would like information on joining the Municipal League, call 206-622-8333 or send an e-mail to muni@munileague.org.