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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Office of the State Auditor Makes a Big Change

~ New Web site unveiled to improve access to local government finances ~

Contact: Jeff Falk, Office of the State Auditor, (651) 297-3683, jeff.falk@state.mn.us

ST. PAUL (01/17/2008) – The Office of the State Auditor today unveiled a new Web site, www.auditor.state.mn.us. The main goals of this new and improved Web site are to be user-friendly for all audiences, to allow visitors to be just two clicks away from the information they are seeking, and to be secure.

“We took into account all of our users and the types of information they want to access. The users whose needs were considered include the public, local government officials and staff, professionals that work with local government, legislators, students, the media, and researchers,” State Auditor Rebecca Otto said. **“Getting this Web site updated and into the 21st century was one of my priorities for my first year in office.”**

The Office of the State Auditor provides oversight for the spending of over \$20 billion per year by local governments across the state. It also issues a range of reports on local government finances. The new Web site allows visitors to more easily access these reports. **“If you would like to access any reports we may have on your township, for example, you simply choose the ‘Reports & Data’ link on our main menu, then select ‘Towns’, and all reports for towns sorted by year will appear. The same process applies for cities, counties and other local entities,”** State Auditor Otto said.

In addition, the new Web site is geared to assist local governments in accessing reporting forms quickly and easily. **“We now have an interactive calendar for deadlines and reporting forms. This calendar lets local governments get to information on deadlines and the corresponding reporting forms in one easy step,”** State Auditor Otto said.

Another addition was a comprehensive FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) section, which provides answers to such questions as “What is Tax Increment Financing?,” “What is an Audit?,” or “What does the Office of the State Auditor do?”

The remaking of the Web site was a team effort. Staff from the office’s different divisions gave their input, as did volunteers from outside the office. **“We had a great group of volunteers that included a volunteer firefighter, a legislator, students, and a few new interns in the office. We obtained varying perspectives on how people look for information, and this really assisted us in crafting this Web site,”** State Auditor Otto said.

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The Web site will be dynamic and enhancements will be added over time to continue to improve users' experience. The address will remain the same at: www.auditor.state.mn.us. The Web site is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Please feel free to e-mail any feedback to Communications Director Jeff Falk at jeff.falk@state.mn.us.

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The Office of the State Auditor is a constitutional office that is charged with overseeing more than \$20 billion spent annually by local governments in Minnesota. The Office of the State Auditor does this by performing audits of local government financial statements, and by reviewing documents, data, reports, and complaints reported to the Office. The financial information collected from local governments is analyzed and is the basis of statutory reports issued by the Office of the State Auditor.

Rebecca Otto is Minnesota's 18th State Auditor. A high-resolution official photo is available for download at http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/images/otto_hires.jpg. To learn more about State Auditor Otto, see <http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=bio>.