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

State Auditor Otto to Chair Collaborative Governance Council

~ Nine-member council created to increase collaboration in government ~

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ST. PAUL (6/2/2010) – State Auditor Rebecca Otto will serve as Chair of the new Collaborative Governance Council created in statute by the Minnesota Legislature. The Council brings together key representatives from local governments to develop recommendations for increasing government collaboration. "The beauty of this bill is that it ended up being crafted so there was no cost; no one will get a per diem, or reimbursements. That was the only way it survived this last session," said Otto.

The statute establishing the Council was created in a bipartisan effort with assistance from State Auditor Rebecca Otto in the recent legislative session and signed into law by the governor. State Auditor Otto, whose office publishes Best Practices Reviews for delivery of local government services, will hold the Council's first meeting by July 30 of this year.

"With the budget challenges facing all levels of government, it's important to do all that we can to help local governments work together to provide services in the most efficient and cost-effective manner," said Auditor Otto. "Local governments are already collaborating, but we want to identify other areas where they could collaborate in these tight times. If there are laws in the way of allowing that to happen, we will make recommendations to change current statute."

The Council will bring together key stakeholders from local governments, including cities, counties, towns, and school districts, and also from three major unions that represent local government employees. The Council will focus on finding ways to increase government cooperation, innovation, and collaboration at all levels.

"The key players who know the issues will be at the table. We will call in experts as needed as we work to find common-sense changes that can be made which will benefit all of our communities, and our state," said Auditor Otto.

The Council will work to develop recommendations to increase government collaboration. Their work may include:

- The review of statutes, laws and rules that slow or prevent collaborative efforts;
- The use of collaboration to improve the delivery of governmental services;
- The use of technology to connect entities and share information, including broadband access;
- The modernization of financial transactions and their oversight by facilitating financial credit and debit card transactions, electronic fund transfers, and electronic data interchanges; and
- The creation of model forms for joint power agreements.

The final recommendations from the Council may be in the form of a report, but will more likely be recommended legislative changes in the form of a bill. They will be presented to the governor and certain legislative committees by early next year. The Council will hold regular meetings, which will be public. Meeting notices will be posted on the Office of the State Auditor website at www.auditor.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>.