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

State Auditor Otto convenes Minnesota Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group

ST. PAUL (10/23/07) – State Auditor Rebecca Otto convened the 12-member Minnesota Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group for its first meeting today. The purpose of the Working Group is to bring together volunteer fire relief association stakeholders to develop relationships, facilitate communication, and work on relief association issues before the legislative session.

“The Working Group will identify and work through current and pressing relief association issues that affect thousands of volunteer firefighters across the state,” State Auditor Rebecca Otto said. **“Our goal is to make the pension process easier and more effective, and we are fortunate to have assembled a group of very knowledgeable and engaged stakeholders to help us in that effort.”**

Relief association trustees throughout Minnesota have forwarded suggested topics for the group to consider. Over the course of 5 meetings this fall, the Working Group will discuss and make recommendations to clarify state laws, simplify reporting forms, and address training and other issues. The group will forward suggested statutory changes upon consensus to the Legislative Commission on Pensions and Retirement.

The following are the Working Group members:

1. City Finance Manager
Tim Simon, Finance Director
City of Elk River
2. Defined Contribution Plans
Curt Roberts, President
Maple Grove Fire Relief Association
3. Defined Benefit Lump Sum Plans
Ed Dietz, Treasurer
Maplewood Fire Relief Association

4. Legislative Commission on Pensions & Retirement

Lawrence A. Martin, Director
Edward Burek, Deputy Director

5. Minnesota Area Relief Association Coalition

Jim Hansen, Vice President of Legislative Advocacy
Spring Lake Park Fire Relief Association

6. Minnesota State Fire Chiefs Association/Monthly Plans

Nyle Zikmund, Chief
Spring Lake Park, Blaine & Mounds View Fire Department

7. Defined Benefit Monthly/Lump Sum Combination Plans

Dave Ganfield, Administrator
Apple Valley Fire Relief Association

8. Minnesota State Fire Department Association

Mike Stroeing, Secretary
Oakdale Fire Relief Association

9. City Finance Manager

Steven Wallner, Finance Director
City of Watertown

10. Defined Benefit Lump Sum Plans

Dave Jaeger, Treasurer
Mahnomen Fire Relief Association

11. Defined Benefit Lump Sum Plans

Tom Nelson, Secretary
Northfield Fire Department Relief Association

12. State Auditor Rebecca Otto

The Pension Division of the Office of the State Auditor monitors investment, financial and actuarial reporting for approximately 720 public pension plans. Its objective is to ensure compliance with state statutes governing the administration of plans covering approximately 20,000 members.

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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 headshot 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>.