



**State Auditor
Rebecca Otto**

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

E-Update

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I wanted to say a big thank-you before my last day in office on January 7th. It's been such an honor to serve Minnesotans as the State Auditor over the last 12 years. When I took office in 2007, I wanted to ensure that the Minnesota Office of the State Auditor was considered the gold standard in government. This cannot happen without having the best and brightest staff who are committed to the mission and the work of the office and who have a supportive work environment in which to achieve excellence. Through a team approach and a clear vision, the Office of the State Auditor is now considered the gold standard in government and is well-positioned going into the future with a very strong, effective group of highly-trained and dedicated professionals.

It is going to be up to Minnesotans to protect this office going into the future. In 2015, the state legislature weakened a very important protection for current and future taxpayers by essentially privatizing county audits. I still contend that the law change was a very poor idea - the law should be changed back. The argument at the time was that counties could obtain "cheap" audits. We know now what "cheap" audits result in – audits that are deficient and substandard and do not meet industry standards or state law. They also mean additional costs to counties for re-audits and reviews. Minnesotans, we can and *must* do better. I ask that you reflect on the value of this office and what it has done to promote and sustain good government in Minnesota that you can trust. And then I ask that you be a voice for its importance.

During my 12 years here, we accomplished many important goals to achieve good government. They included updating the office website to make it more user-friendly for local officials who work with us and to improve transparency. We improved and simplified many of our financial reporting forms so the thousands of local government officials who must report to our office can work more efficiently when reporting. We also developed a plethora of educational materials for local officials to help them be successful stewards of over \$20 billion in taxpayer dollars. These included our E-Update, an FAQ section on the website, Statements of Position, Avoiding Pitfalls, Sample By-Law Guides for relief associations, and so much more. We also provided more online training opportunities and statewide on-site training opportunities.

We completely rewrote the Small City and Town Accounting System (CTAS) and included CTAS users' wish-list items. We secured an ongoing funding source to update CTAS every year. More townships and small cities are using CTAS than ever before to maintain their financial records, which is truly a good thing.

As an office, we issue timely, thorough, efficient and more cost-effective annual audits that meet the standards. We have achieved one of the highest complements of CPAs on staff in the nation. With the Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group, we overhauled state statutes to update them to better meet the needs of the fire prevention community to meet their needs locally. We also worked collaboratively with many partners to create the Infrastructure Transparency Tool so that at a glance you can access comprehensive data that is visually presented on the state of our civil infrastructure.

Thanks to each and every one of you who contacted me over the years to make suggestions about how we could help you be successful when working with this office and managing public funds. I also really appreciate all of you who took the time to recognize the excellent service you received from our staff – whether it was one of our auditors, an investigator, a financial analyst in GID who was providing support for CTAS, one of our staff attorneys, or an analyst who helped answer a TIF question. Those positive comments are always well-received and go a long way!

In closing, serving as State Auditor over the last 12 years has been a highlight for me. I have always believed in and valued good government. Being the State Auditor provided me with a great opportunity to live my values and hopefully put some important measures into place in government that will make things better for the next generation. Wishing all a happy, healthy and meaningful New Year!

In Gratitude,

Rebecca Otto

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