



# The Federal FOCUS

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By Ms. Nancy Zmyslinski, CGFM  
Chapter President*

I gave my presidency theme much thought and consideration as I developed it. As I promised last month, I am sharing my vision for the next 15 months with the members. When I think about what is important to each of us as members and what is important collectively as a chapter it always comes back to doing the right thing for the right reason - so I am naming my theme "Doing It Right".

To kick off the year of "Doing It Right" our first luncheon speaker, Paul LaCroix, Partner at Deloitte, will be speaking on the Sarbenes Oxley Act which is the new legislation on internal control requirements for publicly held companies and how it translates to OMB Circular A123. This is a good example of doing it right for the right reason.

I believe doing it right applies to all aspects of our lives, professional and personal. Who hasn't encountered a situation where you ask yourself do I take the path of least resistance which may compromise my beliefs or ethics or do I hold the course and do the right thing and be able to look myself in the mirror and know I did not compromise and am a stronger, better person because of it.

In doing the right thing as a chapter my officers and I will strive to invigorate the members of this chapter to become and remain active, while seeking to obtain a certification while pursuing to increase their financial management knowledge.

I look forward to an exciting year and Doing It Right.

*Nancy*

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"I am personally convinced that one person can be a change catalyst, a "transformer" in any situation, any organization. Such an individual is yeast that can leaven an entire loaf. It requires vision, initiative, patience, respect, persistence, courage, and faith to be a transforming leader."

*Stephen R. Covey*

### About the Federal Focus

The Federal Focus of the AGA Greater Columbus Chapter is provided as a service to our members to keep them informed of events and news affecting our lives in the government accountability profession. Views expressed in articles are those of the author and may not necessarily represent the views of the chapter leadership. Article content is copyrighted to the author/source from which it was received.

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## CHAPTER CALENDAR

2 March 2005 - AGA Audio Conf.  
Topic: Internal Control  
Breakdowns and Fraud  
Location: DFAS Conference  
Center Buckeye Room (C147)  
Time: 2:00-3:50pm

10 March 2005 - March Luncheon  
Speakers: Mr. Dennis Duquette  
and Mr. Paul Lacroix  
Partners, Deloitte  
Topic: Sarbanes-Oxley  
Location: DSCC Officers' Club  
Time: 11:30 - 1:00 pm

14 April 2005 - April Luncheon

10-13 July 2005 - AGA National PDC  
Orlando, Florida

Beware of computer programmers  
that carry screwdrivers.

*Leonard Brandwein*

## HOW FAST IS YOUR WORLD?: TECHNOLOGY AND YOU

*By Mr. Kevin Frisby, CGFM*

Director, Vendor Pay Support, USMC & Defense Agencies

I was at a conference in February discussing preparations for obtaining a "clean" audit opinion for one of the Services when, during a break, virtually everyone in attendance pulled out his/her "Blackberry." I looked over at the gentleman next to me and mentioned that I simply marveled at how the thing worked.

I said, "I can't figure out how you can receive and read messages and attachments in just seconds, while it can take sometimes longer to retrieve and open messages from a direct line on a network. The fellow next to him leaned over and said, "I've got one better. Have you figured out why you only receive messages addressed to you and not all others floating around out there?"

Considering that this whole "Wireless Fidelity fusion" has still not been fully understood, I looked at him and paused, then said, "Wow! Yeah, how do those scrambled bytes which are addressed to me fly through the air some 700 miles away and end up just like they were when they were sent?" I will be waiting patiently to see if someone can tell me how this works.

I was reading an article in the February 14th issue of *Business Week* on Nanotechnology and where this is taking us as a society. For those of you who do not know what a nanometer is, it is one billionth of a meter. The article goes on to say how "dramas can unfold on the tip of a pin," and "matter behaves very differently at this size."

To put his thesis into real motion, imagine a handheld device (like the Blackberry) with unimaginable power and memory, or nick-proof trim on your car. Better yet, how about nano-based film that will capture more of the sun's light and create a revolution in solar power, or carbon nano-tubes for super-electric batteries for automobiles? The possibilities are endless. After finishing the article, I thought to myself, "That is possibly the next productivity jump we have been waiting for."

Right now, you may be asking yourself, "What is this author's point? What is he really trying to say?" My biggest concern as a parent, manager, and employee is simply this: Are you (read, "we") prepared to adapt? I often remind my children of two things: First, the idea of being mobile in five to ten years will not be restricted to one continent or another, but rather, will be defined in inter-continental terms. Second, you must continually further yourself scholastically, and develop those job-related core competencies which will strengthen your

## TREASURER'S REPORT

AS OF 25 FEBRUARY 2005

### Checking Account

Beginning Balance	\$5,212.34
Deposits	\$ 420
Disbursements	\$ 519.40
Ending Balance	<u>\$5,112.94</u>

### Savings Account

Beginning Balance	\$ 5.00
Deposits	\$ -
Disbursements	\$ -
Ending Balance	<u>\$ 5.00</u>

Total Balance \$5,117.94

## OTHER EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

11 April 2005

Central Ohio Chapter  
4 Hour CPE Event

9 May 2005

Central Ohio Chapter  
CPE Luncheon

**Speaker:** Nat. Pres. Bobby Derrick

For more see

[www.centralohioaga.org](http://www.centralohioaga.org)

## TECH QUOTE

"The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency."

*Bill Gates*

## TECHTALK

### HOW EMERGING TECHNOLOGY WILL CHANGE OUR WORKPLACE

*By Merle Robinson, CTM*

Most IT experts will tell you our future is all about connections and collaboration. This applies in regards to both the tools we use and how we work with people. We need only look at how today the majority of us have both a home computer and a cellphone to see how dramatically our lives have changed since just 1985. Today it is even hard to imagine working without a computer and email in the office. In our future columns we try to introduce you to various trends connected with this evolution. Sometimes this will address commonly used tools, sometimes new tools, and sometimes offer suggestions on how we ourselves may need to change to remain successful in the coming world.

In our future columns we are planning to cover a variety of trends including:

- The Coming of Continuous Connections
- Electronic Relationship Management
- The Challenge of Decentralization and Control
- The Knowledge Worker

Expect to see periodic columns addressing each of these areas. If you have an issue you would like to see us address, drop us a note.

The Coming of Continuous Connections  
(Chapter 1 - Is there one device in my future?)

I heard Marc Andresson speak last year at a computer conference. Some of you may have heard of Marc, he invented a product called Mosaic. Mosaic was the first easy to use web-browser and became the foundation for Internet Explorer and the Netscape Web browsers. Since then Mark has been involved with several IT startup companies and is a popular speaker on the lecture circuit on IT. In technical circles we would call Marc an "Alpha Geek". He is always ahead of the pack.

What Marc suggested at the conference, was that we all needed to start planning on life with one device. A tool that will do most (if not all) our computing that we will carry like a cell phone. We are not yet to one device but portable power is way up. This is a world-wide trend we all should look at. Already there are signs that such a transformation is underway.

This edition of the column will outline some of the currently

Tech Talk Continued on Pg. 8

## GOVERNMENT NEWS

### NEW PASSENGER SCREENING SYSTEM EXPECTED TO DEBUT IN AUGUST

*By Chris Strom*

The Transportation Security Administration expects to begin using a new computer system to prescreen airline passengers this summer, an agency spokeswoman said Thursday.

TSA plans to issue a regulation giving it the power to check passengers flying on two of the nation's air carriers against expanded government no-fly and terrorist watch lists starting in August, said TSA spokeswoman Amy Von Walter. The agency has not decided yet which carriers will be selected.

The system, called Secure Flight, is intended to check personal information on everyone who flies within the United States against watch lists of known or suspected terrorists at the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, including expanded no-fly and selectee lists. Information that might be checked could include a passenger's name, reservation date, travel agency or agent, travel itinerary, form of payment, flight number and seating location.

TSA is currently testing Secure Flight using passenger records from last June. The Homeland Security Department plans to transfer the system to a new program office beginning with the new fiscal year.

TSA has not made a decision yet on whether it also will use commercial data to prescreen passengers. A report from the Government Accountability Office this week ([GAO-05-324](#)) concluded that TSA has not done enough work to determine if information about people contained in commercial databases can be used to improve the system while being properly safeguarded.

GAO said, "TSA measures developed to date do not identify impacts of using commercial data on aviation security in an operational environment. Accordingly, the measures do not generally reflect attributes of successful performance measures for this purpose."

GAO added: "Additional work reviewing the refined measures, should DHS and TSA decide to pursue the use of commercial data for the Secure Flight system beyond concept testing, would be needed to determine if they are designed to identify relevant impacts on aviation security and reflect attributes of successful performance measures."

TSA issued a contract to EagleForce Associates this week for testing the use of commercial data, Von Walter said. The contract is valued at about \$475,000.

TSA plans two phases of testing to determine the cost, feasibility and effectiveness of using commercial data. The tests are scheduled to begin in late February or early March, with results expected in April.

"Until connectivity with the airlines is established, operational testing is not feasible," TSA said in response to the GAO report, which was completed before the contract to EagleForce was issued. "Consequently, many questions relating to operational effectiveness will necessarily remain unanswered until after the conclusion of testing."

The Bush administration's fiscal 2006 budget request also restricts spending on Secure Flight until GAO issues a report on specific privacy and technical matters. GAO is expected to issue another audit of Secure Flight on March 28.

**For More See [www.GovExec.com](http://www.GovExec.com)**

### PLEASE PAY YOUR DUES

Every year about this time the National Office sends out Dues statements. This is your opportunity to continue your activity in the AGA and to support all that the AGA does. Please do not delay paying your dues. For those who just recently joined the AGA you should not receive a dues statement until after your first year. If you have any problems with your dues please call the AGA 1-800-242-7211.

# CERTIFICATION CONNECTION



## INFORMATION

### STUDYING FOR CGFM EXAMINATION 1

*By Virginia Brizendine*

The first examination (although the exams can be taken in any order) covers the "Governmental Environment." A CGFM certificate holder should have an in-depth knowledge of the structure and workings of government. This exam focuses on seven areas:

- A. Organization and Structure of Government
- B. Legal and Other Environmental Aspects of Government
- C. Interrelationships Among Planning, Programming, Budgeting, Operations, Accounting, Reporting and Auditing
- D. Governmental Financing Process
- E. Public Accountability
- F. Ethics in Government
- G. Financial Management Responsibilities and Skills

The subjects covered in each of these sections can be found at the AGA website ([www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org)) on the CGFM tab under "What Do Exams Cover?", Examination 1.

The first two sections of examination 1 address basic civics information often covered in political science or public administration courses. Those subjects were typically studied sometime ago by most of us and focused on concepts. However, those concepts are reality for someone working in or with government. Studying for this examination should include some reflection on how the concepts behind the structure and operation of government affect actions in the workplace. For example, the responsibility to provide education was not delegated to the Federal government in the U. S Constitution; it was reserved to the states. How does this affect the ways the federal government can influence the actions of education programs in the individual states? How does the state's control of its political subdivisions affect a local school district's funding? Most college-level public

administration books have information on government structure and the concept of governmental sovereignty.

The management cycle, while also present in the corporate world, can be applied uniquely in governments. Books used for college level management courses can be referred to obtain both a theoretical foundation and practical applications on the processes and interrelationships in the management cycle. Simply using a search engine such as Google and searching on "plan, program, budget, operate, account, report, audit, cycle" will bring up numerous sites where strategic planning documents support the practical usefulness of the cycle and where audit reports document problems that occur when the cycle breaks down.

Governmental Financing Process addresses various ways governments raise revenues: taxes, grants, shared revenues, user fees, debt, etc. The unique revenue sources of special-purpose governments are also addressed in this section. The Government Finance Officers Association has several books that discuss these issues:

- Local Government Finance Concepts and Practices by John E. Peterson and Dennis R. Stachora, eds.
- Tax-exempt Financing: A Primer
- An Elected Officials' Guide to Debt Issuance by J.B. Kurish and Patricia Tighe
- A Guide for Preparing a Debt Policy

Public administration course books will also have information on other types of financing and often discuss pros and cons of using certain types of financing options.

Many of the topics in the Public Accountability and Government Ethics sections are likewise covered in public administration books. The AGA Code of Ethics is a "must study" for the section of the test (<http://www.agacgfm.org/about/codeofethics.aspx>). Practical ethics application discussions are also encouraged for CGFM candidates. Government employees really do have a private life and the same rights as other citizens. So, what happens if our family owns land next to a proposed government annexation/ purchase that may increase or decrease the value of the land and

my government position makes me a part of the decision-making process? What ethical actions are available for me?

The final section deals with management responsibilities and skills. Test preparation should include reviewing the responsibilities and duties of the federal CFOs as set forth in the CFO Act of 1990. The heads of other government financial groups have similar responsibilities. Management Policies in Local Government Finance, GFOA, and Management Control in Nonprofit Organizations by Robert Anthony and David Young, can provide some insight.

The Governmental Accounting Standards Board's Concept Statement 1 (Objectives of Financial Reporting and Statement 2 (Service Efforts and Accomplishments Reporting) should be studied, as should the Federal Accounting Standards Advisory Board's SSFAC 1 (Statements of Federal Financial Reporting). Other resources for Examination 1 study can be found on the AGA website. Many of these books are costly at list prices. Local AGA chapters may want to facilitate studying for the exams by purchasing some of these publications. Some books can also be purchased from the used book section of [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), [www.half.com](http://www.half.com) or used textbook sites. Several of the books should be available at the libraries of colleges or universities with departments of public administration.

AGA offers a comprehensive online course that allows individuals to take the Governmental Environment training when convenient. The cost is \$195; 8 CPE credits are available for the course. Information about the course is available at [www.agacgfm.org/cgfm/prepare](http://www.agacgfm.org/cgfm/prepare).

Management Concepts, Inc. provides instructor-led courses on topics covered by the CGFM exam. The Government Environment is Course 5601. Information for this course can also be found on [www.agacgfm.org/cgfm/prepare](http://www.agacgfm.org/cgfm/prepare).

Finally, a self-study guide is being prepared for the Governmental Environment exam and is scheduled to be available later this year.

For more see [www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org)

## COMMUNITY SERVICE CORNER

### AMERICAN FINANCIAL SERVICES ASSOCIATION EDUCATION FOUNDATION

#### WHAT WE DO:

Founded in 1990 and based in Washington, DC, the mission of the **American Financial Services Association Education Foundation (AFSAEF)** is to help consumers realize the benefits of responsible money management, understand the credit process and seek help if credit problems occur. AFSAEF is affiliated with the American Financial Services Association (AFSA), a national trade association that represents more than 300 market-funded financial services companies, including more than 30 of the top financial services firms in the world. These market-funded financial services firms serve the diverse credit needs of consumers and small businesses.

#### WHAT WE NEED:

Grassroots' partnerships with educators, not-for-profit organizations, government agencies and AFSA member companies that will help AFSAEF fulfill its mission to promote financial literacy education to high schools students and adults-as well as initiatives that will educate and benefit a specific segment of the marketplace.

#### WHAT'S NEW:

MoneySKILL-an online personal finance curriculum aimed at the millions of high school students who graduate each year without an understanding of credit cards, budgeting, insurance or other money management fundamentals.

MoneySKILL aims to make the learning process more interesting and enjoyable by providing hands-on exercises and activities. Within the course's general content areas- which include income, expenses, assets, liabilities and risk management-students learn fundamentals such as the effect of income taxes on take-home pay, using credit cards, how buying a car compares with leasing one, understanding different types of insurance and the costs and benefits of borrowing. The course includes two real-life simulations that allow creation of a personal, financial plan from the time a student is financially independent of parents to the intended age of retirement.

For more see [www.afsaef.org](http://www.afsaef.org)

marketability in the workplace.

I point out events, such as the ones I described above, to my children all the time. Many of us in today's workplace are approaching our 50s, many are already there, and some are beyond that. That means the follow-on generations, who have the most to gain and lose, must be prepared to equip themselves with the right numbers and types of skill sets and personal attributes if they are to succeed in today's - as well as tomorrow's - demanding and changing work environment.

From a business perspective, the Defense Finance and Accounting Service has invested significantly in the development of its workforce through continuing education support, government-sponsored training, professional certifications, teletraining, internships, developmental assignments and other facets of support. DFAS does that in part because the Agency knows how important the workforce's skill sets are in the marketing of its overall performance and its contribution to the Defense Department mission.

Clearly, in the DFAS world of influence, we have seen the effects from Wide Area Workflow and other integrated systems regarding the decrease in manual labor required to make payments or post transactions. The evidence is overwhelming:

Systemic solutions reduce rework and reduce costs, even though some e-solutions do create rework over the short term. In the future, the inputting of documents and preparation of reports will be accomplished systemically. Think of the overall impact that has on a workforce trained on a productivity platform of an outdated age. As the world takes quantum leaps in technology, such a workforce's once-savored skill sets are suddenly in limited demand.

I don't have a clue where the next ten or twenty years will take us, but I'm certain of this: That "tomorrow" won't look much like our current "today." This is an exciting time, and we need to assess where we want to be in the midst of all this change. And as is the case with many of us, who today are evaluating our own core competencies and marketability, the generations behind us will one day be dealing with that same awareness. We are not all "change geeks," but if we can embrace the "adapter tool" as part of our skill set, we will certainly enhance our chances of improving and growing.

The world is pretty fast out there, and it's not slowing down anytime soon. So as the Blackberry is with us today, so will tomorrow bring the "next big thing" in phenomenal technology.

## But I Digress

*By Kenneth A. George, Editor*

Six months ago, we began producing the newsletter for this chapter, which at the time wasn't even officially a chapter. In one of the first Interim Officers' Meeting we discussed the things that needed to be done to make this chapter a success. One of those things was the production of a quality newsletter. Ever since I, as editor, have strived diligently to make "The Unnamed Newsletter" and "The Federal Focus" what the officers and members would expect of their newsletter.

I have been very fortunate to have some wonderful people to help add breadth and depth to the content of the newsletter. In most chapters it is very uncommon to have even an occasional column written by a member. Our newsletter has a majority of its columns every month written by our members. Wonderful people who make the effort to produce a quality article every time they are asked to write.

I want to thank all of our columnists for their continued efforts and contributions. I hope that you would take the opportunity to thank these people for their contributions as well.

Finally, I want to extend to you the opportunity to expand the quality of our newsletter. If you have a great idea for an article that would like to see appear in the newsletter please let me know. If you are interested in writing for our newsletter please contact me.

available tools that are taking us on the path to one device. In future editions we will review how close we are to the total transformation predicted, and how the change will likely impact our daily practices.

How close to one device are we today?

There are three converging paths toward a single personal device. The first approach is upgrading our cell phones. This is most apparent in the addition of photographic and text messaging features in cell phones (some with limited web connectivity). The second approach is to build on the business infrastructures for secure computing using tools like Blackberry devices. The third is to enhance the current PDAs (Palm and Ipaq). Each approach has pros and cons in today's environment. The first is relatively unstructured and depends upon a communication carrier for managing traffic. In practical terms, this means you don't save much on the device but it keeps device costs down. The second approach has a slightly higher cost because the carrier links traffic to your corporate network so you get copies of network mail but most storage is back at your base. This is the approach Blackberry takes by stripping all documents down to solely text versions of themselves. This provides immediacy in terms of content but loses some communication value (charts don't look like charts). The third and most recent approach is to upgrade PDAs, this is a more expensive option because the devices have more features software and memory.

Overview of today's options:

	Phones	Blackberry devices	GenX PDAs
Device costs	\$0-100	\$ 249	\$749
Phone Service costs	Vary Rates comparable	Vary Rates comparable	Vary Rates comparable
Email/ Net	Unlimited use \$50	Unlimited use \$50	Unlimited use \$50
Short-comings	Limited access to web-sites due to format. No data only text	All documents same standard text	Price High speed Data / Web in limited cities
Advantages	Price Low quality Photo capability	Secure encryption supported for corporations	SD card slot (memory) High speed data/web Reads all web pages Can use more doc formats

So from the chart above you can see we aren't quite to one device yet. In our next edition, we will explore how the current tools can change how we work today.

**Points of Departure for more research (not a product endorsement):**

**Cell phones** - <http://www.cingular.com>

**Blackberry Devices** - <http://www.blackberry.com/products/handhelds/comparison.shtml?type=color>

**GenX PDAs** - **Audiovox XV6600** -

<http://www.verizonwireless.com/b2c/store/controller?item=phoneFirst&action=viewPhoneDetail&selectedPh>

# Professional Development Conference and Exposition

- July 10-13, 2005
- Orlando FL
- Receive CPE Hours



## CHAPTER NEWS

### EVENT RECAP

#### AGA FEBRUARY LUNCHEON

At the February Luncheon, held 10 February 2005, several things happened. Several guests joined us at the luncheon, including Marni Hall, Virginia Brizendine - AGA Former National President, Donna Wolfe - AGA Regional Vice President, and guest speaker Cindy Osga - AGA Senior Vice President. Virginia Brizendine shared with the audience the benefits of networking and professional development, as well as earning professional certifications.

During the Installation of Officers ceremony, AGA Columbus Chapter President, Nancy Zymslynski, introduced the new officers for the Greater Columbus Chapter:

Lori Mikesell - Vice President  
Heather Drake - Secretary  
John Yerkey - Treasurer

Cindy Osga, February's guest speaker, presented the Charter Proclamation for the newest chapter and further spoke on the topic of ethics. The general focus of Cindy's discussion was placed on the definition of ethics, diversity in the workplace, today's multi-cultural world and the need for change in values, and the difference between government and private sector interests. While the general public's expectations of government workers are significantly higher than that of private sector workers, it has been shown that government organizations rank the highest in ethical responsibility and public trust.

### UPCOMING EVENT

#### March Luncheon

*March 10, 2005*

At our March luncheon we have the privilege of having two Partners from Deloitte come and speak to us about OMB Circular A-123.

Dennis Duquette, CGFM, CPA, CDB is currently the Director, Federal Audit & Enterprise Risk Services. Prior to starting with Deloitte, Mr. Duquette served for 30 years as a Federal employee. He spent 13 years in the HHS Office of the Inspector General as a Deputy Inspector General. Prior to that he worked for the GAO for 17 years concluding his tenure as the Associate Director in the Accounting and Financial Management Division.

Paul Lacroix has over 25 years of experience with Deloitte and currently serves as the Partner-In-Charge of the Columbus Office Manufacturing Industry group. Paul's relevant experience includes, serving as the engagement partner on both public and private companies. He has also performed an active role in merger and acquisition transactions.

## EVENT RECAP

### NLC 2005 - A BIG SUCCESS!

*Christina M. Camara*

More than 500 government finance professionals attended AGA's Third Annual National Leadership Conference last week in Washington, D.C. With a theme of "Improving Government Performance: Financial Managers Take Center Stage," the conference brought together leaders from federal, state and local governments as well as the private sector and academia.

#### Some highlights of the conference:

**Financial Management at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)— Andrew B. Maner, MBA,** CFO of the DHS, knew he was in for a challenge when DHS secretary nominee Judge Michael Chertoff told him, "Oh my God, you have a hard job."

The challenge of bringing together 22 agencies from 11 departments, covering everything from hurricane response to drug seizures and more, is indeed a challenge, Maner told the audience at the close of AGA's National Leadership Conference Tuesday. While no handbook exists to create a new agency, starting from scratch also means that bad habits haven't been established yet, he said.

**The Presidential Election and its Impact on Managing Government Operations—Paul C. Light, Ph.D.,** the founder of the Center for Public Service at the Brookings Institution, kicked off the conference with a keynote speech on trends in government management and how AGA can play a role in communicating good government to the American people. Surveys repeatedly show that Americans are resistant to the idea that government is getting better. In fact, they are convinced that government is not particularly accountable and that the lion's share of government money is wasted. That belief persists, Light said, even though financial statements are cleaner and fraud, waste and abuse are down. "The message is not getting out to the American people," he said.

**Identity Fraud—** Called the fastest-growing white-collar crime in the country, identity theft affected 4.25 percent of the U.S. adult population last year, according to **Joanna Crane,** identity theft program manager at the U.S. Federal Trade Commission. Identity thieves who created new accounts in someone else's name usually used the new accounts for six months, and it took victims more than 60 hours to resolve the problems.

**Emerging Issues— Joseph Kull, CGFM, CPA,** director at PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, discussed a research project of AGA's Corporate Partner Advisory Group that aims to make Performance and Accountability Reports more useful. The plan is to gather suggestions from CFOs and others and made recommendations to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Some ideas for improvement include better identifying users' needs, recognizing that most users want information that looks forward instead of looking back, as in the traditional accounting model. He added that PARs of 400-600 pages are simply overwhelming.

**Governing by Network—Stephen Goldsmith,** a Harvard professor and former mayor of Indianapolis, spoke about the need for governments to solve problems through collaboration with nonprofit organizations and the private sector. The recent argument over outsourcing at the federal levels is becoming "increasingly shrill" and "increasingly irrelevant," he said. Rather than focus on whether a service should be wholly privatized or purely governmental, more complicated models can be used. Government will always have too little money and too many problems, he said. Creating networks can be "messy," he said, but they can transform governments into entities that provide better value to the public.

**State and Local E-Government Initiatives—Faisal A. Hanafi,** executive adviser to the Internet Business Solutions Group at Cisco Systems, and **Helene Heller,** the senior director of Project and Information Management at the Housing Authority of New York City, discussed the new dialing codes made available to deliver government-related information to citizens. In New York City, 16 call centers at various agencies were combined into one 3-1-1 dialing code about two years ago. New Yorkers now

have one number to call for nonemergency city services, such as setting up appointments with city inspectors. The 3-1-1 center, operated by city employees, takes 40,000 calls a day and can handle requests in 179 different languages. In contrast, the Texas 2-1-1 system is de-centralized, with 150 call center agents employed by nonprofit agencies working in different locations all over the state. Hanafi and Heller also led participants through the questions they would need to answer to help determine the capabilities of a new system and how it could be implemented.

**Evolving Role of the CFO**—Chief financial officers at various levels of government talked about their ever-changing, and sometimes confusing, role and the need to give the position a higher public profile.

**Samuel Mok, CGFM**, CFO of the U.S. Department of Labor; **Natwar Gandhi, CGFM**, CFO of the District of Columbia; and **Edward Long**, CFO of Fairfax County, VA, gave audience members an insightful and sometimes humorous look at what their jobs entail.

See more at [www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org)

## [THE BOTTOM LINE](#)

### FCRA Works for Consumers

*By Mr. Jason Carney*

According to the Federal Trade Commission, every 79 seconds a thief steals someone's identity and goes on a buying spree. Although credit card companies have established numerous protections for consumers, victims of identity theft are forced to spend an average of \$1,000 on repairing the damage done by identity thieves.

Identity theft can be more than a nuisance. An inaccurate credit report can affect the interest rate that someone pays for debt and whether he or she qualifies for new debt. It can change employment decisions, and be a factor in insurance costs.

Government employees are not immune. On February 25<sup>th</sup>, the Bank of America reported that the financial data associated with 1.2 million employees were lost. Bank of America is the contractor that administers the SmartPay charge card program for the General Service Administration. In the case of the Bank of America gaffe, law enforcement authorities have stated that there is no evidence that identity thieves have yet compromised the lost information.

For years, financial services companies and consumer advocates have advised consumers to check their credit histories on a regular basis. However, checking credit information used to cost the consumer.

The three major credit reporting companies, Experian, TransUnion, and Equifax, charged consumers anywhere between \$9.95 and \$49.95 per inquiry. Many times, credit data would be reported to one of the credit reporting companies, but not to the others. This would sometimes force people to go to each company to make sure that all of the credit reports were accurate.

Much of this has changed because of recent legislation. A new amendment to the Fair Credit Reporting Act allows consumers to request a free credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies for free. The law is being phased in geographically from the western part of the U.S. to the eastern part. Ohio consumers will be eligible for their free credit reports on March 1, 2005.

The free credit report will show whether you've been arrested or sued, how you pay your bills, or if you've filed for bankruptcy. It will be a great tool to protect against identity theft and to help determine your credit position.

The FTC and the big three credit reporting agencies have setup a website for the program at [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com). The report can also be obtained via the Annual Credit Report hotline by calling 877-322-8228.

Links about identity theft and credit reporting  
[www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com)  
[www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov)  
[www.experian.com](http://www.experian.com)  
[www.transunion.com](http://www.transunion.com)  
[www.equifax.com](http://www.equifax.com)