



# The Voice

www.agacleveland.org

Issue No. 9, 2010-2011

May 2011

## Special points of interest:

- Luncheon 5/20/11
- Upcoming Local Events

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## President's Message

I am looking forward to this month's luncheon, which will be held at the NASA facility. NASA finance and accounting professionals comprise a good percentage of our local chapter membership and it is nice for them to have a meeting on their home turf. We had to limit the number of folks who could attend, and demand far exceeded supply. As a result, we are already talking about having another luncheon at NASA in the fall and will try and make sure that those who could not attend this month will have first dibs on that luncheon. If you want to get a sneak peak, plan on attending the FREE family picnic on the NASA grounds in August!

As I end this current term as president (I have held elected office in AGA for about 22 of my 26 years as a federal financial professional), I am encouraged and excited about the future of our chapter. We have many enthusiastic and creative folks who have stepped up and taken on leadership roles. We are recruiting (arm-twisting) others to get involved and the response has been good, but we sure could use more help and we would like to have a diverse membership on our chapter executive committee. If you are interested, please let Michael Hoffman or myself know. Even if you are not sure on which committee you want to serve, we can help you choose. We have resources that explain roles and responsibilities, and many of us have served in those roles and can help guide you along. I know it sounds cliché, but this is truly you chapter and the successes we achieve are due to members taking an active role.



Respectfully,

*Lou Ockunzzi, CGFM*  
 President, AGA Cleveland Chapter

# Meeting Minutes

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## AGA Chapter Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 10, 2011 @ 11:30 a.m.

### Attendees:

Lou Ockunzzi, Michael Hoffman, Bonnie DeJonge, Ché Johnson, Joshua Miller, Michelle Corrigan, Judy Stickland, William Walsh, Ron Gedeon, Helen Moordian, David Curry

### President/President Elect:

Lou:

There were nominations for the following board positions: President-Elect - Karen McLaughlin, Treasurer - Bonnie DeJonge & Joseph Miller, Secretary - Ché Johnson.

Will send out ballots for the nominated board positions.

All committee chairs that want to serve next year need to send Michael Hoffman an intent email.

Voted and passed purchasing a ticket for award winner, that's paid member's guest to attend Recognition award ceremony.

Suggested advertising awards that AGA hands out.

Next board meeting will be on June 8, 2011.

Michael:

He learned a lot at the SLM.

Chapter created guidelines for roles and responsibilities of board positions.

Board positions roles and responsibilities should be easily passed on.

### Treasurer:

Passed out the preliminary report for the seminar and treasury report.

Balanced the treasury report to the bank statement.

### Secretary:

Please send me your agenda for consolidation before board meetings.

### Education and Training:

The pictures on the AGA website should be updated.

The next audio conference is scheduled for June 8, 2011 on Internal Controls.

### Awards and Scholarships:

Scholarships were not paid as of yet. He will send out the checks to the winners.

### CGFM Chair:

At this years PDC, there will be a CGFM review class for \$279. There's no cost for PDC attendees.

### Corporate Communications:

Started working on the AGA yearly picnic.

# Membership

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## Anniversaries:

### 15 Years:

Ms. Maryam A. Akram, CGFM-Retired

Mr. Steven C. Brunot, CGFM                      City of Macedonia

### 10 Years:

Mrs. Nancy Lynne Bernard                      DFAS

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# Local News

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## CONGRATULATIONS! to our 2011-2012 AGA Board Members

President: Michael Hoffman

President-Elect: Karen McLaughlin

Immediate Past President: Louis Ockunzzi

Treasurer: Joseph Miller

Membership Chair: Stephanie Paschel

Membership Co-Chair: Denise Busch

Newsletter Editor: Michelle Corrigan

Newsletter Co-Editors: Brittany Nesser & Thelma Robinson

Education Chair: Aaron Oeken

Education Co-Chair: Judith Stickland

Secretary: Che Johnson

Awards Chair: Lorraine Centrone

Community Service Chair: Cynthia Allgood

Community Service Co-Chair: Shirrell Brown

CGFM Chair: Ron Gedeon

CGFM Co-Chair: Karen Massa

Webmaster: Joanne Kmets Walsh

Early Careers Chair: Sheila Johnson

Advanced Careers Chair: Stan Koch

Events and Planning Chair: Tina Griffith

Events and Planning Co-Chair: Joshua Miller

Programs Chair: Louis Ockunzzi

Programs Co-Chair: Bill Walsh

Accountability Chair: Dena Miller

Accountability Co-Chair: Erica Fleischer

Corporate Communications Chair: Helen Mooradian

Public Affairs Chair: Dionne Kane

Public Affairs Co-Chair: Stefanie Gott

Please accept my sincere apology if I have misspelled your name!

# Upcoming Events

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## National Events

### Professional Development Conference

Atlanta Marriott Marquis  
Atlanta, GA  
July 10th to 13th, 2011

### Internal Control & Fraud Conference

Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center  
Washington, D.C.  
September 19th to 20th, 2011

### Performance Management Conference

W Hotel  
Seattle, WA  
November 3rd to 4th, 2011



## Local Events

### AGA Audio Conference

"The Apprehension of Being Ethical"  
Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building  
May 18th, 2011  
2:00pm - 3:50pm

### AGA Audio Conference

"Internal Controls"  
Anthony J. Celebrezze Federal Building  
June 8th, 2011  
2:00pm - 3:50pm

### AGA Summer Family Picnic

NASA Picnic Grounds  
August 13th, 2011  
12:00pm - 3:00pm

## May Luncheon

For our last luncheon of the program year AGA Cleveland hosted for its members and guests a private tour of the NASA Glenn facility and provided the opportunity to interface with engineers and other technical experts.



AGA Cleveland Chapter President, Lou Ockunzzi, opened the luncheon and introduced the NASA Glenn Research Center Director, Ramon "Ray" Lugo who welcomed everyone and gave opening remarks. Attendees then viewed a short video arrangement on NASA Glenn's accomplishments for 2010 followed by a presentation by NASA Glenn Acting CFO, Larry Sivic, and Gary Garbinski.

Following the presentation, attendees boarded buses and went to the first stop at the Communications, Navigation, and Networking Reconfigurable Test-bed (CoNNeCT) facility where before entering the facility everyone received their very own clean suit and had a free shoe cleaning. Once inside, Diane Malarik treated everyone to a presentation and tour regarding NASA's up and coming projects to be sent to outer space.



The tour wrapped up at NASA's large aircraft hanger where Dan Gorman, NASA employee and retired Air Force service member, explained how the jets in the hanger are used for different testing purposes and showed us several planes under renovation. Everyone was surprised on how small the interior pilot and testing areas of the jets were.

This NASA luncheon was a first for the Cleveland Chapter of the Association of Government Accountants, but surely not the last. The chapter is looking forward to championing future collaborations and the sharing of 'good practices' between NASA, DFAS, and all of the chapter's other government agencies.



By:  
Joanne Walsh and  
Mike Hoffman

## Government Corner

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### Deficit-Reduction Talks Sidestep Medicare, Taxes

By Richard Wolf, USA Today, May 5, 2011

Democrats and Republicans agreed Thursday to focus initially on areas of potential compromise — rather than overhauling Medicare or raising taxes — as they seek to reduce a \$1.4 trillion budget deficit and slow the growth of the \$14.3 trillion national debt.

Both sides came away from a meeting led by Vice President Biden encouraged that common ground exists in the areas of less controversial spending cuts and rules to lock in savings. "We made progress," Biden said.

They will meet again Tuesday, when the specific subject on the table will be potential areas of agreement. That's in contrast to the rhetoric of the past month, when President Obama lashed out at Republicans' plan to turn Medicare into a voucher program and Republicans belittled Obama's plan as cutting too little and raising taxes too much.

"I think today's meeting really was in contrast to the rhetoric that we've heard before," said House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va. "Without attacking anyone's plan, we're looking to find areas on which we agree."

Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, the ranking Democrat on the House Budget Committee, echoed that sentiment. "Everybody is trying to reach a serious, credible agreement," he said.

Biden and the six lawmakers representing House and Senate leaders face two deadlines:

- The nation's \$14.3 trillion debt limit will be reached this month, and extraordinary measures by the Treasury Department will avoid a government default before early August. Republicans say they won't allow more borrowing without action on the deficit — spending caps and additional cuts.
- Any further effort to control the nation's long-term debt will have to be done before Congress adjourns this year, because neither side expects action during the 2012 election year.

Republicans have said they don't expect quick action on their Medicare overhaul. That was made clear Thursday when 50 Democratic senators wrote Obama in opposition to the Medicare plan, guaranteeing it won't pass the Senate.

"The reality is this president has excoriated our budget plan and the Medicare proposal in the plan," Cantor said.

In turn, Republicans say, Democrats should stop trying to raise taxes. Obama's plan calls for raising tax rates on upper-income Americans and eliminating tax breaks enjoyed by powerful industries.

"Nothing is off the table except for raising taxes," said House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio.

## Government Corner (Cont'd)

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### When is a Shortfall a Budget Gap and Not a Budget Deficit?

By Katherine Barrett & Richard Greene, Governing.com, May 2011

On March 1, *The Wall Street Journal* told its readers that Ohio's Republican Gov. John Kasich faced "a deficit estimated between \$5 billion and \$8 billion for the two-year budget cycle ending June 30, which represents about 9 to 14 percent of Ohio's annual state spending."

Those numbers seemed beyond belief. But then, things got even more puzzling. The article also noted that Ohio was in OK shape relative to other states. The *Journal* pointed to "such states as California, where a \$25.4 billion one-year deficit is equivalent to 29.3 percent of its budget."

It's no wonder that so many people are talking -- foolishly, we think -- about state bankruptcies these days. We're told that Ohio isn't the worst and yet, just two months away from the end of its fiscal year, it presumably has to fill a hole equal to 9 to 14 percent of its spending. Perhaps equally horrifying is that Ohio apparently doesn't even know whether it needs \$5 billion or \$8 billion over the next few months.

How could any budget office fix such a deficit, short of taxing like the Sheriff of Nottingham?

It doesn't really have to. The *Journal's* references to "deficits" simply aren't accurate (nor, by the way, were the numbers it attributed to the current fiscal year). The problem is lodged in the way it uses the word "deficit" itself. The mistake the *Journal* and others make is using that word to refer to money a state would need over the course of the next year or the next biennium -- shortfalls that the state has some time to fix through cuts in expenditures, increases in taxes and fees, or other measures. Ohio's budget office has that number pegged at about \$4 billion for each year of the coming biennium. The sky may be cloudy. It may even be storming. But it's sure not falling.

As Ohio budget director Tim Keen says, "In Ohio, deficits are not permitted. We do not have a fiscal year 2011 problem. That's a misstatement." In fact, the current biennial budget, which ends June 30, is in balance, as is required by law. That wasn't easy and required using one-time revenues and other budgetary gimmicks to keep the budget in balance -- not an unusual circumstance in many states as they muddle through the hideous economy of late.

One important note: We bear no ill will toward *The Wall Street Journal*, even though the example we've focused on comes from its pages. The confusion about deficits is widespread in the press, in studies and reports, in blogs and other media. In fact, the reason we've chosen to spend this much space on the *Journal* is that it is one of the most highly respected financial publications in the United States. On the whole, a blogger with 43 followers can make this kind of mistake, and it's not really a big deal. But when it reaches into the pages of hugely influential publications, that's another story.

Curiously the "deficit" figures used by *The Wall Street Journal* were taken directly from a chart prepared by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. But the CBPP carefully uses terms like "budget gaps" and "shortfalls" to refer to these figures. Says Elizabeth McNichol, senior fellow at the CBPP and one of the authors of the recent reports on upcoming budget shortfalls, "We try to be clear in the text of our paper that we are talking about projected gaps, comparing projected revenues to the cost of continuing current services, and we do say when we talk to reporters, that states have to balance their budgets so they don't run deficits in the same way. I do see the confusion as a concern."

Why do we seem so worked up over something that sounds like little more than verbal confusion? It's because we see that misusing the word "deficit" is widespread and we fear that it helps lead to the conclusion that states and cities are in dramatically worse shape than they actually are -- which is bad enough. "Deficit is a much more loaded word because it connects to what people see at the federal level," says Scott Pattison, executive director of the National Association of State Budget Officers. And of course, the federal government is actually allowed to run a deficit at year's end, unlike virtually all states.

"I get really frustrated," Pattison continues. "'Deficit' implies the actual financing of debt. People who don't know assume that states are using the equivalent of Treasury Bills to finance a deficit. But except in rare instances, debt at the state level is used to finance capital (not operating) expenses. You shouldn't use the word 'deficit' for shortfall because deficit implies the financing of debt."

## Government Corner (Cont'd)

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As Pattison further notes, having a shortfall in a future budget provides no proof of financial distress. It just means that projected spending (however that is calculated) is greater than projected revenues, or that budgetary estimates of revenues or expenditures turned out to be wrong. Pattison was budget director in Virginia between 1997 and 2001. The late 1990s were robust times for Virginia's budget, as for most states. "Every year in Virginia we started with a huge shortfall because everyone comes in and says, 'We need this amount of money,'" he says. "Even in good times, every state that I know of starts with a shortfall."

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### **Agency Leaders Decry 'Cheap Shots' Against Feds**

By Emily Long, Govexec, May 3, 2011

Federal employees too often are the victims of negative public feedback and deserve additional support from their agencies, top government leaders said on Tuesday.

At a Public Service Recognition Week town hall hosted by the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service, officials expressed frustration over the negative perception members of Congress and the public have toward federal employees. Managers must be held responsible for making the tough choices necessary to single out and reward high performers, they said, and agencies must encourage innovation, improve communication, and assist employees with career development.

"Government has an extraordinary opportunity to be helpful to people," said Transportation Department Secretary Ray LaHood. "This idea that politicians want to take pot shots at government workers -- I don't like that. If we want good people to serve in government, we have to encourage them, and we do that with the people we already have."

According to John Berry, director of the Office of Personnel Management, the good work civil servants did in support of the Osama bin Laden operation is a chance to change public perception.

"The facts haven't changed, the truth hasn't changed, but maybe the receptivity of the public has changed, and that's a window of opportunity," he told reporters after the event. "We can take advantage of that while the public is listening."

Several event attendees questioned how agencies plan to improve employee experience, boost collaboration and share institutional knowledge as more federal workers become eligible to retire.

Housing and Urban Development Department Secretary Shaun Donovan said his agency has doubled the funding available for manager training and mentoring. Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of the Health and Human Services Department, said government should allow employees to take detail assignments at other agencies and bring back expertise from that experience to their home office.

A part-time retirement option also is under consideration, said Berry. Under this program, retirees would be eligible to work part-time without any penalty to their annuity benefits, but in exchange would be required to mentor younger employees. OPM is looking for opportunities to work with Congress on related legislation, he told reporters.

In addition, regulations for implementing the new Pathways Program, which streamlines hiring for students and recent graduates, are in the final stages, Berry told reporters. The initiative, created through a December 2010 executive order, consolidates a number of disparate government internship programs into a single system targeted to students enrolled in a variety of educational institutions and expands eligibility for participating in the Presidential Management Fellows Program, a three-decades-old leadership development program for advanced-degree candidates. The newly formed Recent Graduates Program will place successful applicants in a two-year career development track.

# Certification



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Regulation begins July 12, 2011

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Buckingham Building, Room BCCE 201  
220 Wolf Ledges Parkway  
Akron, OH 44325  
Classes run Monday & Wednesday evenings from 6pm to 10pm  
Audit begins June 1, 2011  
Regulation begins July 11, 2011

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B-07981.C.01.05/07

## Certification (Cont'd)

### CGFM News

In the spirit of advancing government accountability, the Association of Government Accountants (AGA)'s Cleveland chapter is pleased to announce that March has been declared as the Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM) month in the state of Ohio.

The CGFM Program is distinguished by academic achievement, rigorous examinations and experience in government financial management. Since its inception in 1994, the CGFM designation has become the standard by which government financial management professionals are measured. More than 14,000 individuals have received the CGFM certification.

Known for its comprehensive coverage of state, local and federal governments, the CGFM designation offers an opportunity to highlight the individual's knowledge of governmental financial management and recognize their professional achievement.

The Association of Government Accountants is a 15,000-member professional organization that serves government accountability professionals by providing quality education, fostering professional development and certification, and supporting standards and research to advance government accountability. For more information about the Association or the CGFM Program, call 800.AGA.7211, or visit AGA's website at [www.agacgfm.org](http://www.agacgfm.org).

## AGA Cleveland Chapter Treasury Report



Beginning Balance	\$14,799.06
Deposits	15,270.48
Expenses	<u>(1,924.91)</u>
Ending Balance	<b>\$28,144.63</b>



### Thank You

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# Chairs

## 2010-2011 Chapter Officers

PO Box 99834 East Ninth Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44199

[agacleveland@agacleveland.org](mailto:agacleveland@agacleveland.org)



Cynthia Osga, CGFM  
*Regional Vice-President (Ohio-Michigan Region)*

Lou Ockunzzi, CGFM  
*President (Cleveland Chapter)*

Michael Hoffman  
*President-Elect*

Bonnie DeJonge, CPA  
*Treasurer*

Ché Johnson  
*Secretary*

Frankie Denmeade  
Judy Stickland  
*Education & Training Co-Chairs*

Annie Liquete  
Joseph Blagg  
*Programs and Education Co-Chairs*

Ron Gedeon, CGFM, CMA, CFM, CDFM  
*Professional Certification*

Stephanie Paschel  
*Director of Membership*

Stan Koch, CGFM  
*Retention and Advanced Career Chair*

Tiffany Folmar  
Sheila Johnson  
*Early Career Co-Chairs*

Kristin Keller  
*Community Relations*

Bill Walsh, CGFM  
*Scholarships and Awards*



Joshua Miller  
Michelle Corrigan  
*Director of Events and Planning*

David Curry  
Michelle Corrigan  
*Newsletter Co-Editors*

Dionne Kane  
*Public Affairs Officer*

Joanne Kmets Walsh, CGFM  
*Director of Communications & Technology/Webmaster*

Helen Moordian, CPA, CGFM  
*Corporate Communications Chair*



## About The Voice

AGA Cleveland Chapter's monthly newsletter, *The Voice*, covers member and Association activities on both the Chapter and National levels. *The Voice* features Chapter news, developments within the profession and articles of interest to members. Opinions and beliefs expressed in *The Voice* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Association.

We welcome and encourage members to send us original or reproduced articles that may be of interest to our members for publication in our newsletter.

