



# Fulton County Taxpayers Foundation

*Non-Profit Advocate Of Lower Property Taxes In Atlanta/Fulton County*

January 2012

# How to Achieve Real Transparency in City Government



# How to Achieve Real Transparency in City Government

Taxpayers throughout the country are concerned about the influence of above-average campaign contributions to the awarding of municipal contracts.

The Taxpayers Foundation feels that the time has come for the formation of a non-profit, community-service oversight organization, “People For Open Government”, a grass-roots organization dedicated to open, accountable, and transparent municipal government, curbing the undue influence of campaign contributions on public policy. Opening fair and transparent contract negotiations for Atlanta Airport vendors should be the bedrock of such an organization. Specifically, **“Any and all competitive bids or proposals shall be sealed and shall be opened at the same time in a public place and remain open for public inspection.”** This is Section 6-402(d) of the City of Atlanta Charter.

It was Mayor Reed himself, on June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011, who said that “the Selection Process would be fair and transparent.” He wrote that (*FCTF response in red*):

- “All potential evaluation panel members have agreed to stringent ethics and disclosure requirements.” *Selection committee member’s names were not disclosed until after City Council approved the contract packages.*
- “Concessionaire selections will be made by multiple different panels to maximize expertise and fairness.” *The minutes from those meetings have been never disclosed.*
- “Qualification standards for the proponents have been augmented to include non-airport experience to provide a more level playing field and expand the opportunities for new and small companies.” *The bids for those packages were never disclosed.*
- “No one vendor can win more than 3 of the 12 concession packages available.” *Fox 5 News reported 4 of the awardees won 46% of the concession packages.*
- “All documents will be open to the public after the awardees have been announced.” *On January 17th, Superior Court Judge Constance Russell issued an order requiring the City of Atlanta to deliver additional documents by January 27th. To date, these documents have not as yet been delivered.*

The Taxpayers Foundation supports campaign contributions which are obviously necessary to attract moderate-income candidates. The Foundation does not support what Fox 5 TV reported: **“Over \$160,000 in campaign contributions came from the four largest awardees at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport.”**

With the support of Atlanta taxpayers, “People For Open Government” will ‘open’ the process of government, shine light on its procedures and reform government, more in favor of the citizens than for the special interests. Above all, “People For Open Government” will strongly oppose the practice known as “Pay-To-Play, a practice in which public officials award lucrative contracts to individuals and businesses in exchange for large political contributions.

Recently, former New Jersey Governor James McGreevy stated: **“The “Pay-To-Play” has created a climate which has inevitably jeopardized the moral integrity of government’s basic obligations.”**

There is a growing trend to stop corruption by limiting campaign contributions:

Under the Fair Election Now Act introduced in 2011 in the Senate by Sen. Dick Durbin of Illinois and in the House of Representatives by Reps. John Larson of Conn., Walter Jones of N.C., and Chellie Pingree of Maine, candidates would receive a large number of small contributions from their communities in order to qualify for Fair Election Matching Funds.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, there are eight states that have laws that essentially limit people doing business with the government from making campaign contributions to elected officials or candidates. New Jersey prohibits businesses with state contracts from making contributions to any candidate, state or county political committee. In Pennsylvania, a person who has made a political contribution to a municipal official or candidate is disqualified from entering into a contract with that municipality.

The State Of Georgia is considering a ban on expensive gifts from lobbyists (*an example of an expensive gift would be the \$17,000 Scotland golfing trip for House Speaker David Ralston and his family*). The Taxpayers Foundation feels not only should such a ban on expensive gifts be passed, but the Bill should include the ban on campaign contributions to a municipal official or candidate for a municipal contract. The bill would be similar to that of Pennsylvania or New Jersey.

##

**The lack of transparency in Atlanta government has a cost to taxpayers that is incalculable. There are 3 pending suits against the city regarding airport vendors and contracts. Unless the City turns over all documents involved in the bidding process, the legal suits will tie up the Airport concessions, with the Atlanta taxpayers footing the legal bill (the City is represented by the Alston & Bird senior staff together with the City Attorney).**

**We challenge candidates throughout the city, county and state to control the source and size of their campaign contributions to avoid any question of impropriety.**

**In the words of the great Philosopher Pericles “Then the greatness of our city brings it about that all the good things from all over the world flow in to us...,”**

John S. Sherman, President



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# FCTF 2012 Class Series!

**It's time for another round of classes care of the FCTF! Classes are free to the public!**

**Check our Event tab on our website to register. Or you can call our Hotline to register over the phone, 404-923-9995.**

**Donations are welcome!**

**The first set of classes will take place starting mid-February and run through May. Our venues will be in various parts of the county. You do not have to be a contributing member to participate!**

## 2012 Topics

**“How to Appeal Your Property Value”  
“How to Be a Successful Landlord”**

***We fight for Fair Market Value!  
Let us help you reduce your property taxes!***

I need to **renew or join!** \$25 Senior \_\_\_ \$50 Family \_\_\_ \$100 Patron \_\_\_  
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