

Dear members of the Washington Coalition for Open Government,

Thank you for considering my candidacy for endorsement in the 2008 election. I was pleased by the level of thought and rigor in your endorsement questionnaire.

My record demonstrates my support for open and transparent government, and I have worked to create a more open government where information flows more freely between the state and its citizens.

One example of this is the Government Management and Accountability Program (GMAP). I believe that every state agency and program must be visibly accountable to Washington citizens. The GMAP approach to accountability requires agencies to regularly measure and report the effectiveness of the services they provide, so that problems can be identified and fixed. To accomplish this, I:

- Personally preside over public, frank and regular performance reviews of key agency services.
- Require that agencies base their actions on data that reflects what's successful and what isn't.
- Publicly acknowledge employees when they succeed – and challenge them to overcome problems when they exist.

Another is my public declaration about my expectations for state agencies to inform the public about their activities. I directed the heads of state agencies to reduce backlogs of public record requests and effectively implement the full spirit of the public disclosure laws. I also asked the public records be made available electronically whenever possible.

These are just two examples of my commitment to open government and transparency. But don't take my word for it, according to Governing Magazine, "[Gregoire] runs one of the most open state governments in the country." The Pew Center on the States also ranked state in the top five in the nation for shared information with the public.

You raise some very complicated issues with wide ranging implications for tax payers in your questionnaire, and I don't believe they can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no."

WCOG opposes exempting birthdates from public disclosure. Could this result in a greater risk of identity theft for state employees? There is a vast proliferation of personal information online and there are more instances of identity theft each year. The more personal information there is online and the greater ease with which it is available, the greater the likelihood that information will be found and misused.

That said, I believe third parties should be able to verify the background or qualifications of a teacher or school principal, and we should have a healthy debate about how that can be done, while protecting personal privacy.

I think we should also discuss your questions about how to increase the penalties for violation of public disclosure laws. These fines, when found to be necessary, are ultimately paid by taxpayers, who bear no responsibility for the original violation. Are increasing fines passed onto the citizens really the most effective ways to dissuade and punish disclosure violations? I think there should be a healthy discussion to determine the answer to that question.

Since 2005, we've made our government more transparent, but I believe we can work together and do more. My door is always open, and I would be happy to examine any proposal that might lead to a more open government.

Sincerely,  
Chris Gregoire