
Second Quarter Blog Subject Guide

B&G/July 1, 2017



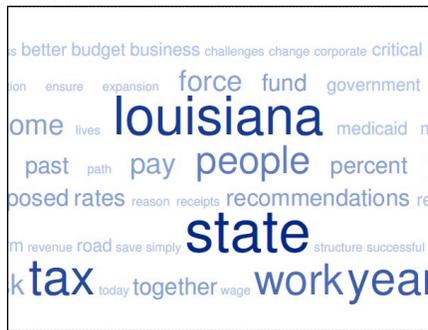
A subject guide to our blog posts between April 1 and June 30, 2017

The B&G Report blog does not (yet) have a good search mechanism. Key words at the bottom of posts are helpful to some extent, but we wanted to give our readers an additional way to keep up with what we've written.

Our plan is to provide an index, each quarter, with a subject-headed list of what we've written. You'll find it below. For clarity, some items appear under more than one heading, but we tried to keep that to a minimum. Most recent blog posts are listed first.

The first quarter subject guide to our blog posts ran from January 4, when we started the Barrett & Greene, Inc. website until March 31, 2017. You can find it in the Resources section of the website or link to it [here](#).

This guide for the second quarter covers the period from April 1 to June 30 and adds some new categories, including communication, education, information technology, state comparisons, taxes, and a heading devoted to follow up on our Governing columns.



B&G Report Subject Guide, first quarter 2017

Audit Watch/Audits

[Performance Audits: Why aren't we telling you the good news?](#) June, 29, 2017 - Journalists often have a hard time putting audit results into context. We point to the Missouri Auditor's Office rating system as providing a potential solution.

[A Q&A on auditor independence](#), June 22, 2017 - Tina Adams, the new president of the Association of Local Government Auditors, weighs in on the importance of having internal auditors, audit committees and protections to ensure independence.

[Auditor independence: An update on Lawrence, Kansas](#), June 22, 2017 - A quick update to the situation in Lawrence, where the city manager has asked the City Commission to abolish the auditor's office. Also, links to other articles about the auditor's role including an Institute of Internal Auditors journal article called "Under Siege."

[Lawrence, Kansas: A city auditor under attack](#), June 13, 2017 - For the second year in a row, the city manager of Lawrence is asking to do away with the auditor's office, matter to be discussed in the evening's budget work session.

[A victory for auditor independence](#), June 7, 2017 - Our Q&A with Portland auditor Mary Hull Caballero after the citizens of Portland voted overwhelmingly in favor of a ballot measure that ensures greater auditor independence.

[Inventories, computer security and data: The big three in audit land](#), May 15, 2017 - In the many audits we read, we find a number of the same findings emerge. Whether the topic is children's health, park management or building construction, public sector managers appear to have trouble keeping a good record of assets, protecting their information and making sure that data is accurate.

[Four keys for on-time, on-budget projects: The Seattle story](#) - May 8, 2017 - A new customer care and billing information technology system for Seattle's two utilities was delivered significantly over budget and behind schedule. The Seattle Office of City Auditor provides lessons learned to the City Council.

[Contract headaches: The Long Beach story](#), April 20, 2017 - a bleak summary report from the Long Beach auditor delves into multiple problems with contract administration, including performance objectives that are ignored, payments that exceed agreements and unrealistic project schedules.

[Utilities: The unkindest cut](#), April 10, 2017 - Austin's city auditor looks at the large backlog of utility cut patches put in place by Austin Water and finds shortcomings in data, staffing and prioritization.



Budget and Finance

[A bleak budget report: Our observations](#), June 15, 2017 - Our take on the most recent Fiscal Survey of the States report, a twice-a-year publication by the National Association of State Budget Officers. The generally dismal news is accompanied by our list of state "mosts and leasts".

[Construction payment scams: Governments watch out](#), June 12, 2017 - We're seeing frequent news articles about government entities and public universities that are duped by bogus email requests for payment, often involving construction projects. The most recent example comes from Southern Oregon University.

[Gaming fatigue: Pennsylvania tavern games fizzle](#), June 5, 2017 - Budget projections of the revenue from tavern games was way off, with \$93.6 million originally projected for annual revenue back in 2013 and \$1.48 million received in 2016. This is one of many examples of difficulties in projecting gambling revenues.

[Cash-handling concerns](#), May 30, 2017 - Even in a world increasingly dominated by electronic payments, governments still have to deal in cash. The San Francisco City Services Auditor provides a chart of common weaknesses when real money is used.

[State retiree health costs](#), May 22, 2017 - We recommend a brief on Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) by the National Association of State Retirement Administrators and the Center for State and Local Government Excellence. One key fact: 10 states bear 77 percent of unfunded liabilities. (Most OPEB liabilities come from retiree health).

[Financial reports: Missed deadlines](#), April 3, 2017 - Many entities struggle to get financial reports done in a timely way. That's a shame. When too much time passes, a late financial report has utility as a historical document, but loses the power to inform current discussions.



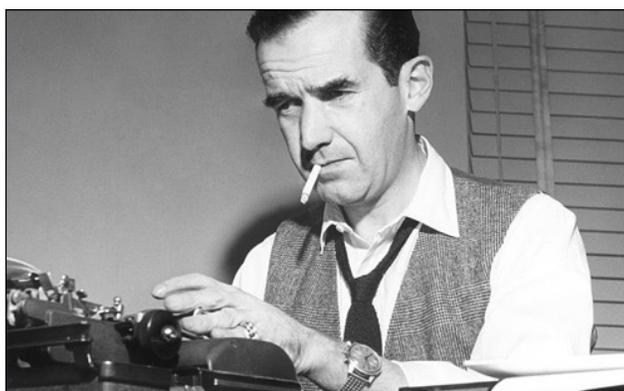
Citizen input

[Fighting citizen frustration](#), April 18, 2017 - Just a handful of states have ombudsman offices with broad jurisdiction. Iowa is one. We talk with the executive director of that office about the advantages of a statewide ombuds approach and about what governments can learn from analyzing citizen complaints.

[California's unique brand of citizen involvement](#), April 11, 2017 - We look at California's civil grand jury system, which tap the wisdom of citizens in all 58 counties to study and report on issues of county and local government concern. Each year about 1,100 California citizens are chosen to examine a wide range of topics, including school district finances, jail conditions, pension funding and countless other issues.

Civic education

[Enhancing civic education: A state-of-the-art library](#), May 3, 2017 - We share our takeaways from a gathering of civic education leaders at the Council of State Governments, where we are senior fellows. We also include a list of major reports, put together by the National Center for Learning and Civic Education at the Education Commission of the States.



Communication

[What journalists should know about covering government](#), April 4, 2017 - After more than 25 years of writing about state and local government, we provide suggestions to fellow journalists about covering this field. For example: If the results of policy change aren't immediate, it doesn't mean it's a failure.

[Seven secrets for dealing with press interviews](#), June 14, 2017 - Based on our own experience as journalists, we provide tips to public officials who want to get their message across to the press.

County government

[Are state-local tensions worse in counties?](#) June 26, 2017 - A recent survey by the Center for Local, State and Urban Policy at the University of Michigan found shaky state-local relations generally. But the worst results were found in counties. We asked the head of the Michigan Association of Counties why.

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Criminal justice

[Jails and bail: We got a snapshot; we wanted a moving picture](#), May 25, 2017 - A report from the New York City Independent Budget office highlights the problem of pre-trial detention for individuals who cannot make bail, even when it is set at low levels. But, it doesn't include trend data that show a drop in both the city's jail population and the number of pre-trial detainees.



Education

[Teacher flight](#), May 9, 2017 - Moving money to the classroom and cutting down on administrative expenses sounds good. But it may mean more work and pressure gets put on teachers. We cover an excellent report about the difficult job of attracting and retaining teachers in Arizona by the Morrison Institute for Public Policy.

Governing follow-up

[A sorry tale of lagging inspections](#), June 20, 2017 - We follow up on our February 2017 Governing magazine Smart Management column about inspection backlogs, with the most recent example: of A dismal audit about fire department building inspections in Houston

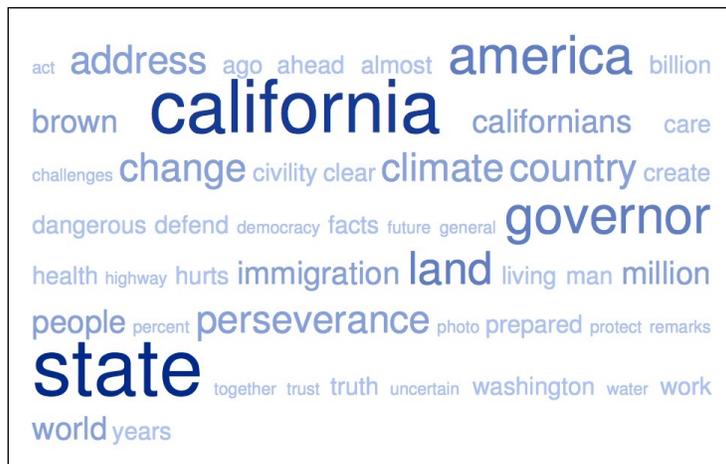
[Recruiting millennials for city jobs](#), May 17, 2017 - We follow up on our April 20th Governing column about workforce recruiting challenges with two short Rancho Cucamonga, CA, videos, which help the city show the wide variety of jobs available in city work.

[Diversity at the top: The King County story](#), May 16, 2017 - King County has been setting aggressive goals to achieve diversity in the top layers of its organization. This is a follow-up to our May 4 Governing column about the benefits - and difficulty in achieving - a genuinely diverse workplace.

[Only one call away: Recruiting videos that re-brand government work](#), May 5, 2017 - We share two entertaining recruiting videos from the City of Ontario, CA, and Fort Lauderdale, FL. This is another follow-up to our April 20 Governing column, which looked at why non-profits and not governments appear to be the go-to choice for young altruistic job seekers.

[Why work for a government if you don't trust it](#), April 25, 2017 - We follow up on our April 20th Governing column about state and local recruiting difficulties, with a look at how skeptical millennial views of politics affect the desire to work for government.

[More tips on working with Gen Z](#), April 7, 2017 - We provide a series of tips on working with Gen Z, the generation that makes Millennials feel old. This follows up on our July 23rd Governing column in which we looked at the recent entry into the workplace of the oldest members of Gen Z, and explored how they may differ from Millennials and from previous generations.



Governors

[Governors' worsts: The other side of the coin](#), June 19, 2017 - We capture Governor State of the State comments about where their states rank at or near the bottom of 50 state lists. (This list of quotes is a text-only companion piece to our video, "Governor Superlatives.")

[Governor superlatives: Which states are the best?](#) May 31, 2017 - Accompanying text to a video captures gubernatorial boasts from the 2017 set of State of the State addresses. (A number of quotes are added that are not in the video version.)

[Meet Iowa's new governor](#), May 25, 2017 - Iowa's first woman governor, Kim Reynolds, takes over for Terry Branstad, who resigned to become U.S. ambassador to China. We provide a video from 2014 of then Lt. Gov. Reynolds accepting the "ice bucket" challenge.

[Words of the states: \(Ala State of the States\)](#), April 13, 2017 - Following the last of the 2017 State of the State addresses in April, we we create word clouds for each of the governors' speeches. Our mostly just-for-fun analysis of our 49 word clouds, show the words "work" and "jobs" appear as the biggest and boldest most frequently. (An interactive map for each of the state word clouds is [here](#).)



Information technology

[Five frustrations in state and local websites](#), June 27, 2017 - Why can't we find phone numbers on websites and why are dates missing on reports? We fuss about these and other annoyances of using government websites.

[Inventories, computer security and data: The big three in audit land](#), May 15, 2017 - In the many audits we read, we find a number of the same findings emerge. Whether the topic is children's

health, park management or building construction, public sector managers appear to have trouble keeping a good record of assets, protecting their information and making sure that data is accurate.

[Four keys for on-time, on-budget projects: The Seattle story](#) - May 8, 2017 - A new customer care and billing information technology system for Seattle's two utilities was delivered significantly over budget and behind schedule. The Seattle Office of City Auditor provides lessons learned to the City Council.



Management, general

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[Motor vehicles triumph](#), May 10, 2017 - In an unusual single-person post, Katherine relates her recent experience renewing her New York driver's license, contrasting the satisfying seven-minute online process with the hours and hours she suffered through at the New York motor vehicles office when she was 22 years old.

[Fighting citizen frustration](#), April 18, 2017 - Just a handful of states have ombudsman offices with broad jurisdiction. Iowa is one. We talk with the executive director of that office about the advantages of a statewide ombuds approach and about what governments can learn from analyzing citizen complaints.

[LEAN management -- the obstacles](#), April 17, 2017 - Lean management techniques have helped to improve many government processes, but even when governments achieve success, the use of Lean tends to be short-lived. A white paper from CPS HR Consulting and the American Society for Quality's government division delves into obstacles that keep Lean techniques from spreading.

Politics

[Ah, for the good old color blind days](#), May 4, 2017 - We yearn for the days in our early career when intense partisan politics were much less evident at the local and state level.



Procurement

[In-state purchasing preferences: The complexities](#), June 6, 2017 - We delve into the reasons that a general contractors' association in Maine opposes recent legislation to increase preferences for in-state purchasing.

[Flowers for government contractors -- but not for government employees](#), May 23, 2017 - An audit of questionable spending by a health care contractor in North Carolina causes us to mull over the different standards that seem to apply to public employees and private contractors doing public work.

[Four keys for on-time, on-budget projects: The Seattle story](#), May 8, 2017 - A new customer care and billing information technology system for Seattle's two utilities was delivered significantly over budget and behind schedule. The Seattle Office of City Auditor provides lessons learned to the City Council.

[Can New Mexico buy from New Mexicans: A procurement story](#), May 1, 2017 - New Mexico's auditor takes a look at the companies that contract with the state and finds that very few information technology contracts go to New Mexico firms.

[Contract headaches: The Long Beach story](#), April 20, 2017, a bleak summary report from the Long Beach auditor delves into multiple problems with contract administration, including performance objectives that are ignored, payments that exceed agreements and unrealistic project schedules.



Recommended reading

[Why is it so hard to tax services?](#) June 28, 2017 - Countless governments have tried and failed to place more taxes on services. We recommend a Stateline article, which explains the obstacles that keep states and local governments from imposing service taxes that could make their tax systems more balanced and productive.

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[A peak inside our virtual files](#), May 11, 2017 - We share with readers five favorite blogs that help us write about state and local government and one favorite blog that is just plain fun to read.

State comparisons

[How does your state rank?](#) June 23, 2017 - A ranking of state performance on a wide variety of topics was recently published by the Missouri Auditor's Office. It's also useful to the other 49 states. We pick out the results we find most interesting.

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[Lessons from Oregon's property tax reform efforts](#), April 19, 2017 - Property tax reform can be tricky and results for citizens may fall short of expectations in a number of ways. We thought this short and well-explained video from Oregon would be helpful to other states contemplating property tax reform.

Transparency

[Transparency: Government minutes missing in action](#), June 1, 2017 - Where have all the minutes gone? We bemoan the poor quality of meeting minutes for some government bodies and the total lack of minutes for others.

[Professional licensing boards: A wall of secrecy](#), April 24, 2017 - An excellent report by the Iowa ombudsman office uncovers multiple examples of citizen unhappiness with the handling of complaints by Iowa licensing boards.



Video

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Water

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Workforce issues (public employees)

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