

**Changing Our Name
A Letter from Past-President Bill Anderson**

"Looking to the Future" by William J. Anderson Jr., CGFM

Upon completing my term as AGA National President and reflecting upon numerous discussions with both AGA members and nonmembers throughout the United States, I want to start a discussion among AGA members on a subject that I have been thinking about for some time. Please hold on to your chairs. I am going to infuriate some of you. I am going to make sense to some of you. And, I may have some of you thinking, "So what is the big deal?" We need to seriously consider and openly discuss hanging our name to the Association for Government Accountability—still AGA, and this is why.

During my presidency, I chose "AGA—The Organization for Accountability Professionals" as my theme. No one can doubt that AGA has much to offer all those who work toward Advancing Government Accountability at all levels of government. For almost 53 years we have been dedicated to advancing government accountability. We also have grown and prospered from two major changes during those years.

First, in 1971, the Federal Government Accountants Association (FGAA) opened active membership to their state and local colleagues, and four years later in 1975, the name was changed from the Federal Government Accountants Association to the more inclusive Association of Government Accountants (AGA). The second major change occurred almost 20 years later in 1994, with the establishment of the Certified Government Financial Manager (CGFM) Program, which expanded our reach into the wide range of disciplines that make up the accountability profession.

We know ourselves as government accountability professionals. However, in talking with potential members and other individuals about AGA, there is a consistent misconception that the Association is just for "accountants" since that is the Association's name. This misconception causes confusion and hinders our attracting and recruiting multi-disciplinary accountability professionals to AGA.

Today I am asking all of you to consider and support a third major change, one that gives recognition to our evolution into an organization for accountability professionals. We are so much more than an Association for accountants and auditors, and we must continue to emphasize that which makes us appeal to the wide range of disciplines that make up the "government accountability profession." It is through this emphasis that we will see AGA grow and become a more effective advocate of those we serve—government accountability professionals. It is time for us to take AGA to the next level by making our name reflect who and what we are.

As I said all last year, I believe AGA is the organization for accountability professionals in the 21st century. One year later I am more certain than ever that is the case and now, we should celebrate our successes by going from the present AGA "Association of Government Accountants" to the 21st century AGA "Association for Government Accountability." I strongly believe this change is consistent with our mission. "Accountability" is one of AGA's core values and strategic themes in our Long-Range Strategic Plan. More importantly, it will support the Association's message in its recruiting and communications efforts.

The name Association of Government Accountants was reflective of the Association's membership in its initial decades of existence. However, it is not fully reflective of AGA today. The addition of the Certificate of Excellence in Accountability Reporting (CEAR) program in 1998, and the Certificate of Excellence in Service Efforts and Accomplishments (SEA) Reporting program in 2002, has moved AGA to the forefront of the government accountability community.

Today AGA is focused on improving performance and assuring accountability of federal, state and local government for the benefit of the American people. For those holding tightly to their chairs, I do want to give some comfort to you. Even though I am recommending a name change, of paramount importance to all of you, the well-known logo/acronym, "AGA," remains the same. In doing so we maintain the great contributions the AGA logo has stood for while expanding our impact on government organizations well into the future.