



ACCOUNTABILITY FOR STATE GOVERNMENT

Dear Friends,

I realize that “government accountability” is not normally a sizzling topic. But we all agree that our government should be accountable. We should insist that our government spend wisely and demand value. For the last several months, I’ve led a group of legislators from all over the state to come up with ways of improving government accountability and results. We’ve developed five accountability principles, and several specific reforms. We’re pledging to make our accountability effort a long-term project.

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Here are five basic ways to make government more accountable:

1. Use straight talk and open books.

Our government should be as transparent and accessible as possible, especially when it comes to spending decisions.

Reform: We should make the Department of Transportation disclose its rankings and priorities for various road and bridge projects. (Right now, they’re hidden from us.)

2. Use honest accounting and realistic budgeting.

Our government should use accurate cost projections and real numbers.

Reform: We should factor inflation into our long-term budgets. (Right now, inflation isn’t included in budget forecasts.)

3. Cut bureaucracy and reward innovation.

Our government should create incentives for efficiency and effectiveness.

Reform: We should streamline technology in various state agencies. (Right now, virtually every state agency has its own expensive technology plan.)

4. Deliver results.

Our government should set goals, and then evaluate success based on achievement of those goals.

Reform: We should justify every budget item based on future needs, not past needs. (Right now, some budget items get regular and automatic increases regardless of need.)

5. Set clear priorities and plan for the long-run.

Our government should think ahead.

Reform: We should re-establish agreed-upon “progress indicators” to measure our long-term success as a state. (Right now, we have no unified measure of state progress.)

As always, please feel free to contact me about any issue, idea, or concern.