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February 5, 2014

Via Hand Delivery

Honorable Toni Preckwinkle
President, Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 N. Clark Street
Chicago, Illinois 60602

Re: Recommendation Concerning County Contractors and Procurement Issues

Dear President Preckwinkle:

This letter is written to request your consideration of a recommendation relating to Cook County contractors and procurement activities. This recommendation, if adopted, serves to extend existing policies furthering the goal of transparency and fairness in Cook County government.

As you may recall, this office previously recommended an ordinance amendment designed to impose a duty on Cook County contractors and related entities to report corruption and other criminal activity in the same manner that Cook County government employees are required. Your office fully supported this proposal which was enacted in October 2012. *See* Code of Ordinances, sec. 34-174 (amendment October 2, 2012). The City of Chicago is currently considering a very similar proposal to impose a legal duty upon contractors to report corruption.

This recommendation of our office is designed to support transparency in government. Specifically, we recommend that a policy, resolution or amendment to the Code of Ordinances be enacted to require Cook County employees to report instances in which they are contacted by a politically-related person or organization if that contact involves an attempt to affect a procurement action either directly or indirectly. Employees could report such contacts on a Procurement Contact Log similar to the Political Contact Log that you distributed to all employees on April 18, 2011 except that the form would be modified to indicate that it relates to procurement activity rather than employment action. Procurement action would be defined to include not only the awarding of contracts, but also extending contracts, changing terms in

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contacts, requiring the hiring of certain subcontractors and any other material activity involving the procurement process. This new policy, resolution or ordinance would require employees to report, for example, any instance in which they are contacted by an elected official seeking to have a contract awarded to a particular contractor. The goal is to prevent politics from entering not only the employment process but also the procurement process.

We believe this is an important issue that would aid this office in detecting unlawful procurement activity. While it is not a common occurrence, this office continues to receive information involving either direct or indirect efforts by politically-related persons or organizations to distinguish prospective vendors from others competing for public contracts. The Political Contact Log endeavor has been very successful and has become "main stream" in Cook County government. I believe that a similar endeavor addressing procurement will offer the same positive results and further the goal of transparency and fairness in government.

I look forward to further discussing this issue with you. Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Patrick M. Blanchard
Independent Inspector General

cc: Hon. John P. Daley, Chairman of the Finance Committee
Ms. Kimberly Foxx, Chief of Staff, Office of the President
Ms. Tasha Cruzat, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the President
Ms. Laura Lechowicz Felicione, Special Assistant to the President
Mr. Ivan Samstein, Chief Financial Officer
Ms. Shannon E. Andrews, Chief Procurement Officer