



## **2022 Annual Report**

**November 15, 2022**

We are pleased to present the Delaware Coalition for Open Government's 2022 Annual Report.

The Delaware Coalition for Open Government (DelCOG) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization. We are a group of volunteers; there is no paid staff. Our mission statement sums up what we do:

“DelCOG is committed to promoting and defending the people's right to transparency and accountability in government. We serve as a resource through education and advocacy, and we work to strengthen Delaware's Freedom of Information Act and its application.”

DelCOG's officers and board members who have served in 2022 are as follows:

- a. Keith Steck, President, who resigned from office recently due to health reasons. DelCOG is in the selection process to elect its new President.
- b. Al Jackson, Vice President
- c. Anita Rush, Treasurer
- d. Letty Diswood, Secretary
- e. Board Members Coralie Pryde, John Morgan, John Flaherty, Dave Breen, John Kowalko III, and Nick Wasileski

DelCOG's Advisory Board consists of Katherine Ward, Bill Cortes, and David Finger.

As of November 15, 2022, DelCOG's treasury totals \$3,511.55. Presently, DelCOG's policy is not to charge membership dues or to actively solicit donations.

The monthly board meeting agendas are written with input from DelCOG officers, board members, and membership. The agenda items address issues and problems that concern government transparency and accountability.

Our website is [www.delcog.org](http://www.delcog.org), which is administered by Katherine Ward, and we are also on Facebook, which is administered by Cynthia Smith.

Doing what is right, fair, and just to promote the public interest is paramount to good government organizations like DelCOG. One of DelCOG's primary roles is *raising awareness* about issues and problems that need to be addressed for constructive change. Change is implemented through education and outreach to the community of Delaware residents, other nonprofits, and elected officials. When necessary DelCOG advocates for change by supporting legislation for transparency and accountability in government that are in the public interest.

Addressing change for the public good requires a long-term perspective – not all efforts are initially successful. Abigail Adams, Former First Lady of the United States, said, “Great difficulties can be surmounted by patience and perseverance.”

DelCOG, like many good government organizations, practices perseverance, and we demonstrate patience and perseverance. Our efforts are often small battles that over time lead to change for the public good.

DelCOG is committed to raising awareness so that “doing the right thing” matters. In 2022, we worked on numerous initiatives. Although the Covid-19 pandemic has somewhat impeded efforts the past 3 years, DelCOG continues to work on issues that have addressed government transparency and accountability which have encompassed the entire state. Here are a few examples.

1. Advising individuals and organizations about the Delaware Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and how to address freedom of information concerns.
2. Cooperating, coordinating, and supporting other Delaware nonprofits and Delaware organizations, for example: like the League of Women Voters of Delaware, Civic League of New Castle County, Common Cause, Network Delaware, Delaware ACLU's Voting Rights Campaign, and Smart Justice Coalitions to promote government accountability and transparency.
3. Supporting the efforts of Lead-Free Delaware for safe drinking water in

Delaware's schools.

4. Supporting the efforts of the Campaign to End Debtors' Prisons to address Delaware court ordered fines and fees that adversely affected Delaware poor. As a result of these efforts, Delaware House Bill HB 244 was passed and signed into law in 2022.
5. Raising awareness about the need for a new Office of the Delaware Inspector General for oversight of Delaware State Agencies. As a result, Delaware House Bill 405 was released by the House Administration Committee, but was never brought up for a vote.
6. Writing editorials that raise awareness about Delaware's FOIA, public body and agency issues, and addressing the need for government accountability and transparency.
7. Giving interviews on good government topics that have appeared in *The News Journal*, *Delawareonline.com*, *Delaware State News*, *Bay to Bay News*, *The Cape Gazette*, *Delaware Live Now*, and *WDEL*.
8. Sponsored a special event with author Hal Weitzman on his book titled, *What's the Matter with Delaware*, which was published by Princeton University Press in 2022. DelCOG's lawsuit, to end Delaware Chancery Court's secret hearings, is described on page 199 of his book.
9. Addressing planning commission and zoning commission FOIA concerns in downstate Delaware.
10. Addressing the state, county, and municipality open meeting rules that apply to public comment of public bodies.
11. Participating in the National Freedom of Information Coalition's (NFOIC) Annual Summit, which was held via Zoom because of the Covid-19 crisis.
12. Promoting public comment across Delaware State Agencies and public bodies.
13. Sponsoring the Sunshine Week program, which consisted of a panel discussion with Senator Tizzy Lockman, journalist Amanda Fries, and Assistant Public Defender Misty Seemans on the topic of "Increased Transparency: Benefits to Law Enforcement and Delaware's Diverse Communities."
14. DelCOG has been asked to write a chapter in a new book by Dr. Robin Kempf at the University of Colorado, on DelCOG's effort to raise awareness for the need of the Delaware Office of the Inspector General.

These initiatives demonstrate DelCOG's efforts to promote accountability and transparency for a more fair, responsible, and equitable government.

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