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**COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE ANNOUNCES NEW WEB SITE,
TOLL-FREE PHONE NUMBER TO PROVIDE OPEN RECORDS
INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE TO TENNESSEE CITIZENS**

NASHVILLE — Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury John G. Morgan today announced two new resources for providing open records information and assistance to Tennessee citizens. Citizens may call toll free (866) 831-3750 or visit www.comptroller.state.tn.us/openrecords/index.htm.

The website includes background on the new Comptroller's Office of Open Records; posting of informal advisory opinions produced by the office; and contact information for citizens to submit inquiries, concerns and questions regarding access to local government public records.

Director Ann Butterworth and Open Records Specialist Elisha Hodge jointly staff the new office, funded by the General Assembly in 2007. They will assist citizens in obtaining open records from local governments, both in guiding citizens to correct offices/officials and in working to resolve disputes regarding access. The effort is addressed both to citizens and to local governments. "The office will answer questions and provide information regarding open records to any person, including local government officials," said Ms. Butterworth.

The office also will informally mediate and assist with the resolution of issues concerning open records laws when a citizen is not satisfied with the response by a local government to his or her records request. Currently, the General Assembly is considering legislation that would provide express statutory authority for the office. "Whether we are called ombudsmen or ombudspersons, our focus is the same," Ms. Butterworth explained.

The mission of the Comptroller's Office of Open Records is to improve the quality of life for all Tennesseans by making government work better. "Having a government that is open and accessible fosters an atmosphere of trust and accountability," stated Ms. Hodge. "My work in the office over the past couple of months opened my eyes to the fact that Tennessee citizens truly feel that government accountability can be ensured through use of the Tennessee Public Records Act and the Sunshine Laws."

The website and toll-free phone number are being announced in coordination with Sunshine Week March 16-22, a national initiative to open a dialogue about the importance of open government and freedom of information. Ms. Butterworth and Ms. Hodge also plan to conduct public outreach programs to create awareness and educate citizens about Tennessee's open records laws. Learn more about Sunshine Week at www.sunshineweek.org.

Citizens may e-mail the Office of Open Records at open.records@state.tn.us.

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