



# Annual Report 2023

# Mission & Values

The Delaware Coalition for Open Government 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.

Established in 2006, DelCOG is a volunteer, nonpartisan coalition of journalists, lawyers, elected officials, news organizations, business owners, government employees, civic associations, and private citizens who believe that government *of* the people, *by* the people, and *for* the people should be open *to* the people.

# Board of Directors

John Kowalko III

*President*

Al Jackson

*Vice President*

Letty Diswood

*Secretary*

Anita Rush

*Treasurer*

David Breen

John Flaherty

Coralie Pryde

Cynthia Smith

Nick Wasileski

## Advisory Board

Bill Cortes

David Finger

Katherine Ward

# Education & Advocacy

DelCOG is committed to raising awareness and advocating for the public interest in open, transparent, and accountable government throughout the entire state. In addition to advocating for the creation of a Delaware Inspector General, other work from the past year includes:

- Assisting individuals and organizations on Delaware Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) concerns, and working with legislators to oppose restrictions to the public's right to know.
- Helping pass HS 1 for HB 34, which requires public comment on major agenda items at school board meetings.
- Supporting the efforts of Lead-Free Delaware to provide safe drinking water in our schools and increase transparency in reporting and remediation of lead-based hazards.
- Opposing the efforts to allow the City of Seaford to authorize artificial entities, such as corporations and LLCs, to vote in municipal elections if they own property.
- Raising awareness about the need for independent oversight to protect civil rights in the use of facial recognition technology, especially proprietary software such as Clearview AI, by Delaware law enforcement agencies.
- Raising awareness about the lack of transparency over the encryption of police and government radio transmissions.

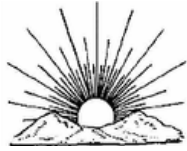
# Delaware Office of the Inspector General

## Why Delaware Needs This Critical Independent Oversight

DelCOG has long advocated for the establishment of a Delaware Office of the Inspector General (OIG), which would provide independent oversight of state agencies and investigate waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.

In 2022, a bill sponsored by State Representatives John Kowalko and Mike Smith was introduced and passed out of committee, but was not given a full vote in the House of Representatives. DelCOG will continue its advocacy for this vital oversight mechanism with the planned introduction of a revised version of the bill by Senator Laura Sturgeon in 2024. The 2022 bill had 15 organizations join DelCOG in calling for its passage, including the ACLU of Delaware, American Promise Delaware, Building People Power, Campaign to End Debtors' Prisons, Civic League for New Castle County, Common Cause Delaware, Delaware Audubon Society, Delaware Laborers Local 199, Delaware Press Association, Lead-Free Delaware, League of Women Voters of Delaware, Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League, Network Delaware, and Sussex Health and Environmental Network.

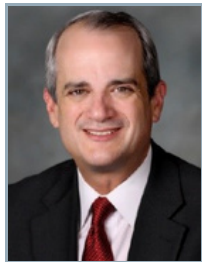
DelCOG has written a chapter in an upcoming book edited by Professor Robyn Kempf from Villanova University, which will detail our experiences attempting to create an OIG.



# Sunshine Week 2023

## Ensuring Transparency and Accountability Why Delaware Needs an Inspector General Now!

On April 24, 2023, DelCOG and the Delaware Press Association hosted a panel discussion on the need for a Delaware Inspector General. The panelists were Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street, Delaware State Senator Laura Sturgeon, Delaware State Representative Mike Smith, Delaware Online / The News Journal Underserved Communities Reporter Anitra Johnson, and Lead-Free Delaware Co-Chair Sarah Bucic. The discussion was moderated by DelCOG President John Kowalko III.



**Stephen B. Street, Jr.**  
Inspector General  
State of Louisiana



**Laura Sturgeon**  
Delaware State  
Senator  
4th District



**Mike Smith**  
Delaware State  
Representative  
22nd District



**Anitra Johnson**  
Underserved Communities  
Reporter  
Delaware Online / The News  
Journal



**Sarah Bucic**  
Co-Chair  
Lead-Free  
Delaware

### **Thank you to our additional sponsors:**

Common Cause Delaware  
Delaware Poor People's Campaign  
Delaware Public Preschool Coalition  
League of Women Voters of New Castle County  
Lead-Free Delaware  
Metropolitan Wilmington Urban League  
Network Delaware  
New Jersey Society of Professional Journalists  
RISE Delaware

# Elected Officials Reception

**December 5, 2022**

The biennial Elected Officials Reception was a huge success, with a packed room at the Ed Oliver Golf Course Clubhouse in Wilmington. This event provides an opportunity for the public to “meet and greet” with state, county, and municipal officials. Author John Riley also held a book signing for *How He Played the Game*, his award-winning biography of Ed “Porky” Oliver. The event was hosted by DelCOG, the Delaware Press Association, the League of Women Voters of Delaware, and the League of Women Voters of New Castle County.



Elected officials in attendance included County Councilmember Dave Tackett, Rep. Cyndie Romer, Rep. Kerri Evelyn Harris, Rep. Sophie Phillips, Rep. Laura Sturgeon, Lt. Gov. Bethany Hall-Long, Sen. Kyra Hoffner, Rep. John Kowalko, and Rep. Paul Baumbach.

The Government For The People Award was presented to the Campaign to End Debtors’ Prisons.



The Distinguished Journalism Award was presented to Amanda Fries, watchdog reporter for *The News Journal*.



# Common Cause Awards Ceremony

**May 24, 2023**

DelCOG was a proud sponsor of Common Cause of Delaware's award ceremony to honor Representative John Kowalko Jr. with the John Gardner Lifetime Achievement Award for Delaware.



Rep. Kowalko is a passionate champion of government transparency and accountability. He spent 16 years as State Representative for the 25th District, representing Newark, where he routinely advocated for expanded FOIA access and other open government issues. In 2022, he sponsored HB 405, which would have created a Delaware Inspector General.





# Inspector General Conference

**May 23-25, 2023**

In October 2023, Board President John Kowalko III, Board Member Nick Wasileski, and Advisory Board Member Katherine Ward attended a conference hosted by Professor Robin Kempf at Villanova University for authors of the upcoming OIG book chapter.

# National Whistleblower Summit

**July 28-30, 2023**

Board Member Cynthia Smith attended the 3-day National Whistleblower Summit in Washington, D.C. The event discussed the contributions of whistleblowers and the importance of whistleblowing protections.

# National Freedom of Information Summit

**October 3-5, 2023**

The National Freedom of Information Coalition hosted the annual National Freedom of Information Summit with a wide range of speakers and topics. The virtual event was attended by several DelCOG board members.

# Annual Meeting

**December 6, 2023**

The 2023 Annual Meeting featured a discussion with open government experts Claire Snyder-Hall and Shannon Manigault, moderated by DelCOG President John Kowalko III, followed by questions and answers with the audience.

Claire Snyder-Hall, Executive Director of Common Cause Delaware, is a writer, activist, and advocate who has taught at several universities and lobbied for democracy reform in the Delaware legislature. She spoke about the need for greater transparency in Delaware, including what she has learned from her personal experiences with the so-called “Delaware Way.”

Shannon Manigault, Inspector General of the City of Atlanta, Georgia, presented on the role of an inspector general and why that role is crucial for effective oversight of government agencies. She previously worked in the New York City Department of Investigation and for the New York City Council.



Claire Snyder-Hall  
Executive Director  
Common Cause Delaware



Shannon Manigault  
Inspector General  
City of Atlanta, Georgia

# In the News

DelCOG published an editorial in a statewide newspaper:

- Delaware Coalition for Open Government and Delaware Press Association. “This is why Delaware needs an inspector general.” Opinion. *The News Journal*, April 28, 2023.

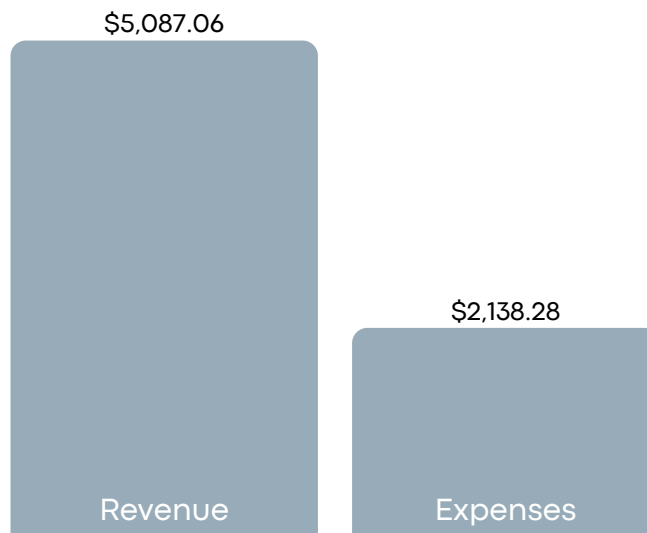
DelCOG was also featured in the news several times:

- “Panel to discuss establishing an inspector general in Delaware.” *Delaware State News*, April 10, 2023.
- Rachel Sawicki. “Local officials, open-government advocates, discuss need for Inspector General.” *Delaware Public Media*, April 24, 2023.
- Sam Haut. “Legislators, activists hear benefits of inspector general.” *Delaware LIVE*, April 24, 2023.
- Joseph Edelen. “Lawmakers, supporters discuss creating inspector general office in Delaware.” *Delaware State News*, April 25, 2023.
- Melissa Steele. “Group pushes for inspector general in Delaware.” *Cape Gazette*, April 25, 2023.
- Paul Kiefer. “Delaware State Police purchase of facial recognition software prompts some calls for oversight.” *Delaware Public Media*, May 21, 2023.
- The News Journal Editorial Board. “Hall-Long’s campaign audit reveals a stark reality: Delaware deserves greater transparency.” *The News Journal*, November 17, 2023.
- Joseph Edelen, “Advocates hopeful for establishment of inspector general’s office in Delaware.” *Delaware State News*, December 11, 2023.

# Financials

Between October 1, 2022, and September 30, 2023, DelCOG received \$5,087.06 in donations and interest and had \$2,138.28 in expenses. The total accounts balance at the end of September 2023 was \$9,237.31.

## Q4 FY 2022 to Q3 FY 2023



An audit was performed by John Kowalko III and Nick Wasileski for this period. It found no concerns with the finances or recordkeeping. All invoices, deposits, and withdrawals were verified and found to be consistent.

For additional information, visit [delcog.org/financials](https://delcog.org/financials).

# Thank you to our supporters


Thank you to all those who support open government and have assisted DelCOG in advancing the public's right to be informed about their government. In the past year, hundreds of individuals have attended DelCOG events and supported our open government efforts. Thank you to all those who have dedicated their time, efforts, and resources.

For those who are interested in joining DelCOG, anyone is welcome to be a member if you believe that a government of the people, by the people and for the people also should be open to the people. You can also join our mailing list to learn how you can support open government in Delaware. To learn more, please visit [delcog.org/join](https://delcog.org/join).

**Address:**

1012 Kent Road  
Wilmington, DE 19807

**Phone:**

 (302) 319-1213

**Email:**

 [contact@delcog.org](mailto:contact@delcog.org)

**Website**

 [www.delcog.org](http://www.delcog.org)

