



## MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

# News Release

For Immediate Release: 12/14/2006

### Leggett Announces Establishment of Fraud Hotline; Initiative Supports Leggett's Goal of Greater Government Accountability

Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett announced that a new Waste and Fraud Hotline will begin operating today to prevent and detect fraud, waste and abuse in government operations. County employees and contractors will now have the opportunity to anonymously report improper or illegal activities. The Hotline will be overseen by the Montgomery County Office of Inspector General (OIG), which was created in 1997 by legislation sponsored by Leggett when he was a Councilmember to improve government efficiency and effectiveness.

“At my inaugural, I pledged that residents should expect a responsive, fiscally responsible and efficient County administration,” said Leggett. “I sponsored the 1997 legislation that created the Office of Inspector General to make sure that Montgomery County stays accountable and effective and ensures that taxpayer dollars are wisely spent. Operation of a Waste and Fraud Hotline is another tool the County will now have to prevent abuse and further the transparency that is a hallmark of good government.”

Joining Leggett at the announcement was Thomas J. Dagley, Inspector General for Montgomery County, who stressed that, while Montgomery County does not have a history of fraud-related problems, these types of problems are more likely to be detected by a tip than through audits or other means.

“Independent Fraud Hotlines are being used across the country to send a positive message to employees, vendors and taxpayers that government leaders are committed to protecting public resources,” said Dagley. “I encourage all County employees to take advantage of this opportunity to communicate concerns. Montgomery County has a history of good government. With implementation of the Inspector General Hotline, taxpayers can be assured that preventing and detecting fraud, waste, and abuse is an important part of the County’s governance system.”

The Hotline may be accessed by a toll free phone number, through an online website or by email. All calls and contact are strictly confidential. Calls will be accepted 24-hours a day, seven days a week, and complaints can be received in more than 150 languages. The Hotline will be operated by an independent contractor, The Network, which is based in Norcross, Georgia and has nearly 25 years of experience in providing Hotlines to about 1,100 organizations.

“Employees and vendors can be confident that their confidentiality will be protected if they report fraud, waste or abuse through the new Fraud Hotline,” said Montgomery County Council Vice President Mike Knapp. “No one who uncovers illegal or improper activities should have to worry about reprisals when they do the right thing to protect County taxpayers.”

The OIG Hotline is part of the County's efforts to ensure management and fiscal accountability and transparency in operations. The existence of the Hotline will also serve as a deterrent to improper or illegal activities. Through the Hotline, the OIG seeks information on contract or procurement fraud, theft of County funds or property, kickbacks, workers' compensation fraud, fraudulent travel or other reimbursement claims or significant waste of County funds.

"The Fraud Hotline sends a positive message to County employees and residents – that the County's leaders care about good government and ensuring that the use of our resources is carefully monitored," said Montgomery County Councilmember Phil Andrews.

Issues that are not appropriately handled through the Hotline include day-to-day management issues; Equal Employment Opportunity complaints; issues normally handled by the grievance process; employee benefits and compensation questions or concerns; or issues that are the responsibility of other government agencies.

The OIG will evaluate the effectiveness of the Hotline by determining the number of complaints resulting in corrective action and the percent of employees who rate the hotline as an effective way to confidentially report concerns.

According to the OIG, studies have shown Hotlines to be effective nationwide:

? 48 percent of fraud cases within government agencies are uncovered through tips (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE) 2004 Report to the Nation).

? 54 percent of individuals reporting through a hotline prefer to remain anonymous (The Network's 2006 Corporate Governance and Compliance Hotline Benchmarking Report).

County employees will be informed of the Hotline through email, mail and posters at worksites. Employees and vendors can call the Waste and Fraud Hotline at 800-971-6059. Web-based access is available at [www.tnwinc.com/webreport](http://www.tnwinc.com/webreport) or by emailing [reportline@tnwinc.com](mailto:reportline@tnwinc.com). For more information, contact the Montgomery County Office of Inspector General at 240-777-8240 or [www.montgomerycountymd.gov/IG](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/IG).

The general public can report problems about County services at [www.montgomerycountymd.gov](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov), by calling 240-777-2500 or by sending a letter to the County Executive at 101 Monroe Street, 2nd floor, Rockville, MD 20850.

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