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Conference of Western Attorneys General 2006-2007 Leadership Announcements

(Anchorage) – Idaho Attorney General Lawrence Wasden accepted the position of Chair of the Conference of Western Attorneys General (CWAG) on August 10, following the organization's 2006 Annual Meeting in Anchorage, Alaska. Additionally, several new leadership positions were announced, including a new Executive Director and Legal Director.

CWAG is an association of the Attorneys General of 18 member states in the Western United States and 10 associate member states. The association assists its membership by cultivating knowledge and education, and facilitating cooperation and coordination in areas of interest to the West, including: water resources, fish and wildlife, public lands, minerals, environmental protection and Indian law.

With over 500 attendees present, including the Attorneys General and staff for CWAG's member states and the Attorneys General of Texas, Nebraska, Tennessee and West Virginia, CWAG members inducted Attorney General Wasden as the 2006-2007 Chair of the Association. Attorney General Wasden accepted the position and announced "This body serves as an indispensable forum for the elevation of issues and topics of critical importance to the Western States. I look forward to coordinating the efforts of our many Attorneys' General Offices to bring our concerns and solutions regarding vital public resources and our environment to the attention of the federal and state agencies operating in the West."

CWAG Executive Director Tom Gede said "We enthusiastically welcome Attorney General Wasden in assuming this key leadership position for the Western States. He will be of great value as we work with a variety of federal agencies, including the Department of Interior, the National Indian Gaming Commission, the Department of Energy and the Department of Agriculture on the many public lands, fish and wildlife, energy and Native American legal issues that fall under the responsibility of the Office of the Attorney General. General Wasden has worked with this association for more than 16 years, formerly as the Chief Deputy Attorney General of Idaho and now as the State of Idaho's Chief Legal Officer. Lawrence's leadership style is based on integrity, fairness and a direct approach which emphasizes solutions rather than differences."

CWAG also announced its 2006-2007 officers. Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff moved to the position of Immediate Past Chair, a voting member of the Executive Committee. Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard assumed the position of Vice Chair, while South Dakota Attorney General Larry Long was elected to the leadership position of 2nd Vice Chair. Attorney General Long will rotate through the membership positions and assume the Chairmanship of the Conference at the association's summer conference in 2008.

Additional leadership changes for CWAG were also announced with the promotion of current Deputy Director Karen White to the position of Executive Director of the Association beginning in October 2006.

The members also hired South Dakota Legislative Director and Assistant Attorney General Charles McGuigan as Legal Director for the Association. Mr. McGuigan will be assuming the position in November after serving in the South Dakota Attorney General's Office for the past 15 years. Mr. McGuigan was praised by South Dakota Attorney General Long as "An extraordinary legal mind, a premier public servant and as the well-rounded legal expert CWAG needed to continue the association's work on Western issues."

As Legal Director for CWAG, Mr. McGuigan will be responsible for serving as the daily source for up-to-the minute legal information on key issues in the West, including: oil and natural gas; western energy supplies; state preparedness from natural disasters such as forest fires, tsunamis and floods; potential state liability issues arising from Avian Influenza (H5N1); improving law through multidisciplinary task forces, Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act issues; state legislative initiatives involving methamphetamine in the West; and identity theft, to name just some of the topics.

CWAG is a bipartisan group comprised of the attorneys general of 15 western states and three Pacific territories. Members include: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam.

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Editors note: For more information, please contact CWAG Executive Director Tom Gede at (916) 323-1939 or Deputy Director Karen White at (916) 833-2603.