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# Council for Government Reform

*Established 1991*  
*Serving the Overburdened Taxpayer*

## *History of the Council for Government Reform*

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The Council for Government Reform has its roots in the National Center for Privatization.

In 1983, the National Center for Privatization was launched by Willard Garvey and other Wichita, Kansas businessmen who began a volunteer effort to educate Americans about the then-new concept of "Privatization." They believed that many government services could be performed more efficiently and effectively within the private sector, thereby eliminating considerable government waste. They also felt that many unnecessary and unsuccessful government programs could be eliminated, taxes reduced, and the role and influence of government in the private sector as well as the lives of citizens lessened.

While even the initial focus of the organization was national in scope, at the local level, monthly meetings began in Wichita to discuss the future of the city. This early "idea exchange" influenced NCP policy positions and accounted for much of its focus. NCP hosted a successful conference in 1985, entitled "Where the Future Begins," to address the issue of family choice in education and school vouchers as a means of ending the public school monopoly, which included Dr. Milton Friedman. This was one of the earliest serious investigations of vouchers as a way of privatizing education.

At the same time, NCP recruited more than 50 persons prominent in the privatization effort nationwide for its new Advisory Board. Thus began fruitful cooperation between NCP and numerous other organizations: Reason Foundation, Citizens for a Sound Economy, the National Center for Policy Analysis, Advocates for Self-Government, Competitive Enterprise Institute, and the Cato Institute. Such cooperation is still very significant today. One early NCP effort, the creation of a database of literature on privatization, begun in 1985, is now being maintained by the Reason Foundation's Local Government Center.

A newsletter was another vehicle designed to educate citizens about government waste. The newsletter, published monthly, included editorials from prominent individuals who have written about: Union Power, Postal Monopoly, Rules for Privatization Success, Privatization of Prisons, Public Housing, and Deposit Insurance. As appropriate political issues came to the fore, NCP responded with views supporting the Line Item Veto, Balanced Budget Amendment and Privatization of Public Lands.

In 1986, NCP published a book entitled *Our Town 2001: A Wichita Countdown*. Using Wichita as an example, the book explained what the 21st century might look like in any town where privatization was successful, and suggested there could be substantial benefits. It also served as a philosophical mission statement and planning document for NCP.

NCP increasingly began to receive inquiries about privatization efforts from public officials and interested citizens. NCP provided information and assistance on numerous privatization issues for foreign countries from Australia to Norway, and for a variety of U. S. non-profit organizations. Through mass mail, NCP was able to address different privatization and related topics and generate public support which resulted in petitions to Congress while, on a local level, it raised privatization issues at candidate forums.

In the late 1980s, the organization published books on privatization successes in the U.S. and acted as a facilitator for private companies wanting to work with government to privatize services. Other activities included educational essays, full-page major newspaper ads, compilation of a nationwide literature database, and regional volunteer programs.

In 1991 the organization was incorporated in the District of Columbia as a 501(c) (4) corporation. The initial headquarters was in McLean, Virginia and the primary issue which was the focus of the organization was the need for reform of Social Security while still protecting the interests of senior citizens for whom Social Security had become, in essence, a social contract. Public education campaigns, using direct mail, were developed and the grassroots members were asked to sign petitions, write letters to Congress, and to donate funds to support the organization. In order to reflect its broader purposes, the organization was officially renamed "Council for Government Reform (CGR)." Offices had since been moved to Capitol Hill and now to Arlington, Virginia.

Grassroots lobbying and public information campaigns were conducted on a number of issues including opposition to statehood for D.C., support for a balanced federal budget, and how to deal with problems of governmental waste, fraud and abuse. The main issues of concern, however, remained focused around the viability of Social Security and Medicare, and the excess federal spending made possible by raiding federal revenues collected for Social Security. A companion organization, "Center for Government Reform" was incorporated as a 501(c)(3) charitable public foundation.

The Council has developed a very strong direct lobbying program which has included making visits to hundreds of congressional offices and identifying everyone interested in (or resistant to) Social Security reform. Legislative analyses on pending proposals has been completed and the Council has achieved a higher level of visibility on these and related issues than ever before. The number of grassroots supporters around the country has also continued to grow, with direct mail public education, grassroots lobbying and fundraising reaching annual all time highs in terms of volume. In the Spring of 1998, the Council's Board of Directors appointed [Charles G. "Chip" Hardin](#) as President and CEO of CGR, charging him with the task of taking the Council's efforts to reform government to a new level, with even greater impact toward a better, smaller, less costly, more responsive, and more responsible government which preserves the security and competitive choices of all Americans.

The Council currently has nearly 500,000 supporters and produces millions of letters, newsletters, and booklets each year responding to its members and prospective members throughout the country on the concerns that they and others have about the policies and practices of the government. Numerous surveys are undertaken on a variety of issues. It raises more than \$2 million per year, much of which is reinvested in continued public education and grass roots lobbying. Some of this amount is spent on a staff to directly lobby Congress on behalf of the organization, to monitor legislation, and to produce additional communications with the public. Under the general policy

guidance of a Board of Directors of five, and with the encouragement of hundreds of thousands of members and supporters, the Council for Government Reform continues to promote better government at all levels.