MAYOR BALLARD SIGNS ETHICS REFORM ORDINANCE

INDIANAPOLIS – (August 21, 2008) Following a promise to institute a higher standard of ethical conduct for those who work for the City of Indianapolis, Mayor Greg Ballard signed his Ethics Reform Proposal into law today. The package is a complete overhaul of the ethics requirements for city and county elected officials, appointees, employees and those who do business with the city and county.

“Our new Ethics Code is an important step forward to ensure that the decisions of government are made with transparency, impartially and in the best interest of the public,” said Mayor Ballard. “The public and the elected, employed and contracted public servants deserve a modern ethics code to provide clear guidance, protect those who do the job right, and sanction those who do not.”

Among the many changes, the Mayor’s Ethics Reform includes sensible limits on gifts, political activity, patronage, nepotism, the use of city-county property for non-business purposes and excess compensation for performing official duties. It also includes detailed provisions to prevent conflicts of interests in voting and contracting. Perhaps most importantly, “whistleblower” protection has been instituted so that employees who report suspected violations of the ethics code will not fear retribution.

Key changes were also made to the Gift rule. The old 250 dollar annual maximum allowance has been lowered to 25 dollars per gift and an annual maximum of 100 dollars. Additionally, under the Reform Package, a broader scope of individuals are required to file an annual Economic Statements of Interest. Additionally, Economic Statements of Interest for all city and county elected officials are now required to be available online for public inspection.

“The Mayor’s Ethics Reform also now requires that we train all new and existing appointees and employees. This is a key component to an effective Ethics Code,” commented Corporation Counsel Chris Cotterill. The training will also include key aspects of the Open Door Law, the Public Records Act, and on Offenses Against Public Administration.

The proposal, which received bi-partisan support in the City County Council, passed the Council by a near unanimous vote of 28 to 1, with Councilors Lutz, Sanders, Cockrum, and Mansfield being essential stewards of the proposal through the Council.

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