



# Leon County

## Board of County Commissioners

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### NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 13, 2012**

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## **Leon County Wins Sunny Award for Website Transparency**

*Only 214 awarded out of 6,000 government websites nationwide*

Leon County Government has received a national honor for maintaining open government. The County's website was awarded the Sunny Award, presented by editors of the Sunshine Review to honor the most transparent government websites. Leon County's website was one of only 214 throughout the nation to receive the award out of more than 6,000 government websites analyzed by Sunshine Review – a national nonprofit organization dedicated to government transparency.

Leon County's newest accomplishment was recently announced by Sunshine Review to launch "Sunshine Week" – a period from March 11 to 17 that is nationally recognized by the media and civic organizations to celebrate the efforts of activists and the strides taken towards open government.

"Leon County knows the importance of promoting transparency in everything we do," said Leon County Commission Chairman Akin Akinyemi. "We are honored to receive a Sunny Award and will continue to empower citizens by providing the necessary information to keep them informed on the actions their government is taking on their behalf."

For the 2012 awards, editors at Sunshine Review analyzed more than 6,000 government websites and graded each on a 10-point transparency checklist. Editors looked at content available on the websites against what should be provided. They sought information such as budgets, meetings, lobbying, financial audits, contracts, academic performance, public records and taxes. Leon County received a grade of "A" during the grading process for its website, which was recently redesigned and re-launched.

"We are very pleased our website improvements have earned national recognition," said County Administrator Vincent S. Long. "Our website reflects the County's continuous efforts to better serve our residents and to provide the information they need at their fingertips."

Leon County's website improvements were launched in September 2011 complete with the overall goal of providing users a "virtual front door" to County government. Photos of each member of the Board of County Commissioners are prominently displayed on every page.

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Scrolling over each commissioner's image brings their name and corresponding district plus a direct link that provides more informational detail including their phone number, email address and commissioner's aide. Commissioners' biography, accomplishments and district information are also available.

Redesigning the website was a critical part of the County's strategic initiatives. Visitors to the new website immediately are greeted by a Citizen's Connect button that helps residents navigate through different areas. With just one click, visitors can: Access online services; report or track a problem; make an inquiry online or talk with a live person.

Horizontal navigation is also displayed at eye level displaying the County's "Core Four" areas for visitors to view on the website. Those areas include 'Demonstrating Performance and Results' where residents can see the County's programs. 'Promoting Transparency, Accountability and Accessibility' is another core area where residents can utilize the new "Your Checkbook" feature, which is an online searchable database for actual County expenditures. 'Engaging Citizens and Partnering with the Community' shows residents different opportunities where they can get involved. And the final core area is 'Ensuring Livability and Sustainability', which focuses on the County's economic development and sustainable living. Other website features include videos, emergency notification registration, a Commission calendar and a news ticker with up-to-date information.

Six states earned nearly half of the 214 Sunny Awards. Those leading states are Florida, Texas, Illinois, Virginia, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

"The Sunny Awards recognize governments and school districts that are doing an exemplary job at proactively disclosing information to taxpayers," said Michael Barnhart, President of Sunshine Review. "We would like to congratulate Leon County for being a champion of transparency and serving as a leader to every state and local government around the nation."

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