

# Meet AGA's Next National President

Richard V. Norment, CGFM, CIA

By: Marie Sullivan Force, MA



**R**ichard Norment has the reputation in the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury's office as the "go to" man for information that others would never find on their own. His files are legendary, his organizational skills second to none. Now as Norment prepares for his year as AGA's "go to" man, he plans to put these skills to work for the Association, using the theme "Lead to Succeed."

At 58, Norment serves as the director of the division of county audit and assistant to Comptroller of the Treasury John G. Morgan. He and his staff of 92 oversee annual audits of the state's 95 counties, with 87 of the audits actually performed by his staff.

A protégé of William R. Snodgrass, who retired two years ago after a remarkable 44-year term as comptroller, Norment is the second member of the Nashville Chapter to hold AGA's highest elected position. Charles L. Harrison, CGFM, director of management services and also an assistant to the comptroller, was National President in 1992-1993. Harrison, Norment and other members of the Nashville Chapter are credited with establishing AGA's Annual State and Local Government Leadership Conference in 1992. Snodgrass recently expressed great pride in seeing his staff rise to leadership ranks within the Association and the profession.

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The group of AGA members who started the Nashville Chapter in 1977 has worked together in the comptroller's office for more than 30 years. Norment, who served as AGA National Treasurer in 1997-1998, has logged more than 34 years in state government and says the job has never bored him. He says he vividly remembers his first days and never once thought—"I've got 30 years to go before I can retire." He acknowledges that government jobs will never be as financially rewarding as private sector positions, but he can't imagine being more fulfilled by any career.

"I tell our younger employees that I don't look at these 34 years as an eternity," he says. When he just started his career, he says he was told by someone he respected that government would be a good place to start, but it was not the place to make a career. "I almost didn't do it because of that negative comment"

Norment believes that the example set by Snodgrass and continued under his successor John Morgan, has probably kept an entire group of people—including fellow AGA members Arthur Alexander, CGFM, Arthur Hayes, CGFM, Bob Powell, CGFM, Barbara White, CGFM, and Harrison—happily employed for many years. "He was demanding," Norment recalls of Snodgrass, still a close friend and frequent lunch partner, "but we had freedom too. No one had to punch a clock. You might not talk to him for a week or two, but when he was ready to talk, you had better be ready with the answers."

He hopes to take the pride and professionalism he has found in Tennessee to the national stage as AGA's President. "In our office, we have a tremendous amount of pride in our work and in the fact that we are respected by the local governments we have oversight of," he says, adding that he wants to help to instill more of that pride in AGA's members and encourage them to share the message with others.

"On the whole, I think there is a lot of professional pride within our membership, but we need to communicate it better to others thinking of making a career in government," Norment says. "Our Association can provide a forum to encourage our members to get the word out that we are proud to be government professionals."

Despite the fact that Norment decided early on where he wanted to spend his career, he has still made a serious commitment to professional development through his work with AGA and other professional organizations. Currently serving his third three-year term on AGA's National Execu-

tive Committee, Norment has served as president of the Nashville Chapter, as Regional Vice President, as chair of the membership and PDC host committees and has served on the Finance and Budget Committee for years. He recently completed a term as president of the Tennessee Government Finance Officers Association and has been active in the Government Finance Officers Association and the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA), including a stint as president of the IIA's Nashville Chapter.

"Lead to Succeed," Norment's theme for his AGA presidency, lends itself to promoting professional development and other critical programs during the next year. Primarily, like all government employees, he is aware of the pending human capital shortage and hopes AGA can take its recruiting efforts to college students who may not be considering a government career. "We have to get out there and try to find that next generation of workers," he says.

Following the example of other recent National Presidents, Norment plans to closely follow the Association's Long-Range Strategic Plan, which was adopted in 1998. As is the case with the plan, Norment's top two goals focus on education and the advancement of AGA's CGFM Program.

"In both cases, the foundation is there, but now we need to deliver the services," he says. "We're the ones who are going to be responsible for seeing the things we have launched through to maturity"

Norment, who recently celebrated his 30th anniversary with his wife Judy, also takes great pride in his two children, Brian, 28, and Cristy, 25, both of whom work for accounting firms. Brian works in the international assignment services division with PricewaterhouseCoopers in Washington, D.C. Cristy is an office assistant with MD&D, a national accounting firm in Atlanta. While he never encouraged them to follow his career path, he is pleased that they both have healthy attitudes toward work in general. "The example you set is larger than words," he says. "They perceived me to be a happily employed person. It was like the way Mr. Snodgrass was—you knew it just by being around him."

So as Richard Norment begins his term as AGA's 52nd National President, he believes he has a valuable message to take on the road with him. "As AGA members, we cannot be complacent about hoping someone else will make this Association and this profession succeed," he says. "We have to take up that cause ourselves and we must Lead to Succeed!"