

Governing Honors Public Officials Advancing the Next Era of Results-Driven Leadership

Magazine recognizes state and local leaders spearheading new approaches to strengthen government and improve communities

SACRAMENTO, CA, UNITED STATES, September 1, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Governing](#), a trusted news source for state and local government leaders for generations, today announced its [2026 class of Public Officials of the Year](#).

For more than 25 years, Governing has recognized the best and the brightest among elected and appointed officials. At a time when public leaders are navigating rapid change, complex operational challenges, and heightened expectations from the communities they serve, the 2026 class reflects the power of pragmatic leadership. While their roles and obstacles differ, they share a commitment to turning ideas into action and improving outcomes for residents.

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Cathilea Robinett, CEO of e.Republic and publisher of Governing

“These honorees demonstrate what it takes to lead amid growing complexity and rapid acceleration,” said Cathilea Robinett, CEO of e.Republic and publisher of Governing. “Whether they are embracing new technologies, rebuilding trust in essential services, or finding innovative ways to address long-standing community challenges, they share a remarkably practical approach: focus on what works, put people at the center, and deliver results. Their work is a powerful reminder that sometimes the most meaningful change comes from leaders who quietly improve the systems people rely on every day.”



Governing's 2026 Public Officials of the Year award recognizes some of the nation's most effective state and local leaders, changing lives and government.

The 2026 Public Officials of the Year, in alphabetical order, are:

* Randy Clarke, General Manager, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) — for restoring confidence in one of the nation's largest transit systems through steady improvements in safety, reliability, and customer experience.

* Kirk Cullimore, Senate Majority Leader, Utah — for helping shape a national conversation around AI, privacy, and digital identity, proving that thoughtful policy can encourage innovation while protecting the public interest.

* Andre Dickens, Mayor, Atlanta — for tackling housing affordability, workforce development, and public safety with a collaborative approach that keeps residents at the center of every decision.

* Santiago Garces, former CIO, Boston — for using artificial intelligence to simplify permitting, improve online services, and expand digital access — applying technology to solve long-standing problems.

* Laura Kelly, Governor, Kansas — for demonstrating that bipartisan, fiscally responsible leadership can also drive economic growth and long-term investment.

* Kristin Walker, Budget Director, North Carolina — for strengthening evidence-based budgeting so taxpayer dollars deliver better outcomes.

Their work addresses some of the most consequential challenges facing state and local government today. Read their full profiles at governing.com/poy.

About Governing

Governing is a leading source of news, analysis, and insight for state and local government leaders. Through content and communities, Governing explores the ideas, challenges, and innovations shaping how public leaders manage, develop policy, and serve their communities. Governing's platform highlights emerging trends in public administration, fiscal management, economic development, and public service delivery. Learn more at www.governing.com.

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Heidi Lorenzen
e.Republic
+1 925-353-8836
[email us here](#)

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