



Advancing Excellence and Public Trust in Government

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Over the last four decades the public trust in government in the United States has fallen dramatically due to a "perfect storm" of contributing factors, such as a seemingly never ending string of political scandals, partisan polarization and toxic attack politics, and miserable failures to respond to natural disasters or the devastation of the Great Recession. This book contains the academic presentations that were made at the Symposium on *Advancing Excellence and Public Trust in Government* that was held at the National Press Club in Washington D.C. on September 17, 2007. In particular, the Symposium focused upon how improving transparency in governmental operations could be used to assuage some of the popular doubts about and hostility toward America's governments.

There was certainly a very broad consensus at the Symposium that transparency in government is extremely desirable, needs to be improved, will bring reform and improvement to the public sector, and should make a major contribution to the restoration of the public trust in the United States. Indeed, support for improved transparency can be found across the political spectrum, as both conservatives and liberals believe that more openness in government will promote parts of their very different policy agendas. Truly, transparency appears to be an all-American issue.

The discussion at the Symposium revolved around three broad themes. The first concerned transparency about government operations per se, such as how decisions were made and what detailed budgets are. A second and somewhat broader theme concerned greater transparency of "performance measures" which tell us what the effects of specific policies are and how effective or efficient government agencies are. Third and even more broadly, some of the participants argued that general questions of governance provide the key for a renewal of public trust among our citizenry. This book of presentations at the Symposium is organized into four parts based on this distinction. Part I contains

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