

2010 PUBLIC OFFICIALS OF THE YEAR

The Performance Artist

Diana Urban

Representative, State of Connecticut



Read more of the [extended Q&A with Diana Urban](#).

Whenever Diana Urban drives to work, she's listening to her local NPR station. And anytime talk turns to the state budget, the Connecticut representative calls in to chat. "The hosts now say, 'OK, it's Rep. Urban again, we know this is going to be about RBA!'"

The fight for RBA -- results-based accountability -- has been the defining aspect of Urban's career. Upon arriving to the Connecticut Legislature in 2001, she saw a broken system that would never achieve accountable, transparent and efficient government. She also saw the answer in RBA. "I started in on performance, standards, results, accountability, and I backed it up with my knowledge of economics," she says. "And that is a potent combination-somebody who's willing to fight for an issue and has a lot of ammunition from 20 years of teaching economics."

Effective January 2011, RBA will require all Connecticut agencies to submit performance metrics with their budgets. "You have a result you want to get, like a clean and healthy Long Island Sound," Urban says, "then you start to work backward and say, 'Are the programs we have here getting us there?'"

RBA has been a work in progress for six years, and Urban fought hard for its implementation. Her willingness to take on a fight can be seen in her other favorite cause: animal rights. Beyond legislation, Urban has rescued and sheltered horses, dogs and cats at her farm in rural Connecticut. "If you're not tenacious, if you're not willing to run into the wall and figure out how you get around that, you're never going to get there. It takes an enormous amount of tenacity."

That tenacity proved successful with RBA. It is the first and only legislation of its kind in the U.S., and Urban says it positions Connecticut to target programs that aren't working rather than making across-the-board cuts. "The idea here is to say which ones are really great and which ones are crummy."

— **Jessica B. Mulholland**
Photo by David Kidd