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**UNIOIN COUNTY WATCHDOG ASSOCIATION FILES RECORDS
COMPLAINT OVER UNION COUNTY'S DELAY OVER RELEASING THEIR
2008 BUDGET TO THE PUBLIC**

Union County - The Union County Watchdog ("UCWA") announced today that it has retained attorney Walter Lauers, to file a complaint against Union County government with the states Government Records Council, which is charged with enforcing the provisions of the states Open Public Records Act.

The complaint filed with the GRC alleges that at a meeting of the Union County Board of Freeholders on May 29, 2008, the UCWA's president, Tina Renna, requested a hard copy of the County's budget. Ms. Renna was told that the County ran out of its copies on hand. Therefore, the next day Ms. Renna submitted an OPRA request to the Records Custodian asking for, among other things, "an electronic copy of the 2008 budget." In response, the Records Custodian wrote that she would provide the document by June 10, 2008.

The Records Custodian violated N.J.S.A. 47:1A-5(e) by not providing the requested budget record immediately. "The county did not hand over their budget to the UCWA until 4:49 pm on June 3, 2008. We find it to be no small coincidence that on this day the Star-Ledger published the county's press release regarding the budget. The release only offered a view of the budget from the county's perspective and had no input from the public or other officials" said Tina Renna, president of the UCWA.

The UCWA has asked the States Government Records Council to find that the county violated the Open Public Records act and award the UCWA a reasonable attorney's fee. "It is unfortunate that the taxpayers are not only forced to suffer with the county's irresponsible spending, but they are also forced to foot legal bills for the county's efforts to keep information regarding how their property tax dollars are being spent from them" said Renna.

In 2007 the county settled out of court a UCWA complaint which challenged the county's charging an \$8.00 an hour fee when the watchdog group placed an Open Public Records Act request for back up documentation supporting certain county expenditures found in the county check registry. This resulted in the taxpayers having to pay \$1,857.45 in legal bills to the UCWA's attorney. Included in the documents obtained were bills for

freeholder meeting refreshments, travel expenses, a catered luncheon, home internet bills, and DunkinDonuts receipts for Sheriff Ralph Frohlich.