

Local Government Efficiency Talks Are Here to Stay

I usually take this space to offer some personal insights on the people or issues featured in this issue of *BizVoice*. I will stray from that pattern, however, to briefly discuss a topic that, despite efforts to the contrary, will rightfully not go away.

Local government structural efficiency has been featured in previous editions of this magazine, in other Chamber communications and primarily in the *Indiana Project for Efficient Local Government* study released earlier this year. There are two basic elements we continue to emphasize: A local government system dating back to 1851 needs reviewed and modernized, and flexibility should be incorporated to allow local discussions and local solutions to local problems.



The study and subsequent Chamber communications do not call for the elimination of township government. The Indiana Township Association, however, in reaction to the growing calls for local government reform, prefers the bunker mentality in the effort to protect the jobs of its members, regardless of the costs to taxpayers. Recently, it went so far as to try to discredit the Chamber study, a follow-up to the 1999 COMPETE report that was also prepared by Crowe Chizek, by paying for a review filled with inaccuracies and some absurd assertions.

Energies spent on frivolous efforts to protect the state quo should instead be focused on ways to make local government services operate at a higher level. Certainly, cost savings are a part of that equation in these times of state and local financial stress. But, the key is to meet the rising demands of residents and businesses by eliminating duplication and waste, improving responsiveness and consistency, and adapting to changing priorities.

The *Indiana Project for Efficient Local Government* study is one spoke in a well-rounded wheel. Before the report was released, local discussions were taking place in communities across the state and seven bills addressing some aspect of local government efficiency were introduced in the 2004 General Assembly session. Since the release, independent proposals from Indianapolis Mayor Bart Peterson and the Kernan administration's Peak Performance Project have identified local government reform as a key priority.

Let's stop the squabbling about methodology and poor relief appropriations vs. actual expenditures. Let's accept the reality that a 21st century economy can't thrive with a 19th century local government structure. Let's work together to discuss, devise and implement solutions that benefit all.

Kevin M. Brinegar
President

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