



from your Associate Director

By Jerry B. Crabtree

TOI Associate Director / Education Coordinator

SPRING IS HERE! This means that many of you have had or are planning for your Annual Town Meeting. As a required annual event the electors of the township gather and review the issues of relevance before the township for the upcoming year. I hope that your township annual town meeting was a good experience and you are able to see the benefit of the government closest to the people—TOWNSHIP GOVERNMENT!

The Local Election Officials Handbook (2017) and Township Caucus Guide (2017) was recently updated and made available via the State Board of Elections website. These handbooks overview the consolidated elections and caucuses and have many useful dates and briefed information that is useful as you prepare for the upcoming township elections. The subject area is paramount as we enter the educational district program season. Download and print a copy of the book to use as a desk reference.

TOI is working diligently with the 99th Illinois General Assembly. Bryan, Tim and I have been talking to legislative leaders regarding many of the bill introductions impacting township government statewide.

The common theme discussed with members in both the Senate and House of Representatives is that the condition, interpretation, benefit and direct impact of township government varies significantly as we consider the rural and urban areas of Illinois. Members of the Illinois General Assembly do not always clearly understand the negative impact that consolidation can have if not properly analyzed. There is such a diverse application of services when we compare rural and urban services provided by township government in our great state.

Many conversations on the issue of consolidation or elimination of townships refer to the practices of the state of Indiana, as they eliminated the position of assessor and transferred the responsibilities of assessment to the county. This has not resulted in overwhelming achievement of improved government services by any means. The result has contributed to a back log of assessment appeals and confusion over the completion of annual assessments.

A second issue that circles back in the conversations

is the suggested tax savings from consolidation or elimination. Many times the financial gain for township residents is limited or only a significant property tax savings when compounded over several years. The cost of township services to the individual property owner is normally small when compared to the increased cost to county or municipal government for assuming the services provided at the same level.

No county government, from my review, eagerly seeks to gain control of the services provided to local residents by township government. It simply does not happen. County and Municipal governments are struggling with their own financial concerns. Assuming additional responsibilities is almost like an unfunded mandate which we fight against annually in Illinois. The recently updated Cox Report provides analytical proof

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that township government is the most effective when calculating its fiscal existence.

Individuals who are researching and evaluating the possibility of consolidation or elimination of township services must take a close look at results of Evanston Township and Belleville Townships in (2015/2016). Both areas of the state are unique and provide a different perspective on the impact of consolidation. The fiscal analysis that normally accommodates a consolidation recommendation has not been provided by the Governor's office as a companion background document for the recommendations from the Lt. Governor's Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force.

What you can be assured is that the Township Officials of Illinois are paying close attention to all of the issues resulting from the Task Force report. Watch the website for updates on the issues resulting from the Illinois General Assembly as we move forward this legislative season. We need you in Springfield on April 6, 2016 participating at the Capital on Township TOPICS day. We must make sure that members of the Illinois General Assembly clearly understand the impact of the consolidation or possible reduction of township services in Illinois.

Update on Local Government Education Network

The program has had two successful WEBINARS. The evaluations from the January and February programs indicate that this is a widely acceptable way to reach our members with valuable educational opportunities. We are looking forward to seeing you at upcoming events.

The first policy interpretation regarding the setting of salaries for township officials in 2016 was printed in the March, 2016 *Perspective* magazine. We are looking for policy requests. If you have something that you would like to have considered please forward the request to me at Jerry@toi.org.

TGEN 2016 Speaker Profile

I would like to include over the next few months a reflection from each of the scheduled speakers for the 2016 Education District Program.



**DR. GLENN
POSHARD**

My first spotlight is on Dr. Glenn Poshard. Dr. Poshard offers the following responses:

What is your message to township officials in 2016?

"Because of the desire on the part of state government to get their "fiscal house in order," make sure you can show

that your township is being run in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible. Be prepared to show the public that they are receiving the maximum benefit for the services you provide at the least possible cost. This will shelter you from the unfair criticism that is coming from state officials that townships are not as efficient or effective as other units of government and provide a strong rebuttal to those who want to consolidate or eliminate the township form of government."

What do you think is the biggest obstacle for township government in 2016?

"The continuing budget stalemate in Springfield is creating a rush to judgement on the need to reform local government. An attempt to change public perception to eliminate townships means an all-out effort to defend the need for townships to survive is necessary. Townships must stand together to make their case and utilize the considerable political strength they enjoy with the legislature to confront any attempt to diminish their need and their service."

What do you hope that your program provides to attendees of the TOI Education District Program?

"It is very important that those who serve in the townships understand the role that townships have played in the history of building America. We need to understand the principles of government that undergird and sustain the townships as perhaps the most important form of government "by the people." I hope to give those who work in the townships a sense of pride in knowing that they are "heirs of that first generation" who established government "closest to the people" as the highest form of government."

What advice would you give to newly appointed township officials or those interested in seeking office?

"Despite the attempts by some to paint public servants as people without integrity, public service remains the most honorable profession to which one can aspire. Don't practice gutter politics to get wherever you are trying to go, and once you are there, just treat the people with the same respect that you want from them. Don't listen to the critics. They are always around. If you do your job and do it well, there will always be somebody who finds fault with you. Don't respond. Just keep going."

COME TO SPRINGFIELD FOR TOPICS DAY – April 6, 2016

The venue is set, the agenda is scheduled and the guest speaker Illinois State Treasurer Mike Frerichs is eagerly awaiting your participating in the daylong event. We hope that you take time and travel to Springfield for the day on April 6, 2016.

