



Legislative Report

By Timothy S. Bramlet

TOI Legislative Consultant

Senate lays out plan for township consolidation

Senate Bill 388 (*Bush, D-Grayslake*) and **Senate Bill 389** (*Morrison, D-Deerfield*), which comprise a consensus among a majority of state Senators as a measure toward consolidating local governments, passed the Senate on April 21.

THE ILLINOIS SENATE heard testimony on more than a dozen bills aimed at making it easier to consolidate townships before Senate Democrats laid out a plan that represented somewhat of a consensus among most Senate members. The Township Officials of Illinois, however, oppose some facets of one of the two bills the Senate advanced.

TOI Executive Director Bryan Smith testified against the more onerous proposals that were introduced this spring and were slated for a hearing on April 13 in the Senate Local Government Committee. (Those measures are outlined among the list below.) The Committee then held all of those measures without taking any action on them (effectively killing them for the spring), and adopted the amendments to SBs 388 and 389 before sending them to the floor on a unanimous vote.

SB 388 lays out the process for consolidating townships, including two or three townships into one, a single township into two adjoining townships, and/or a "coterminous" township into a municipality. Any of these changes can only be initiated by the township board and must be approved by a majority of voters in an election. It further removes the current statutory requirement that a county must convert to a commission form of government if it eliminates townships county-wide. TOI's board voted to be neutral on this legislation since it must have both township board say-so and voter approval. It passed 53-0.

SB 389 is opposed by TOI. It allows any township to abolish a road district of that township if the roads of the district are less than 15 miles in length (as determined by the county engineer) by resolution of a majority of the township board AND by voters in a referendum.

The TOI board voted to oppose any proposals that used a trigger of greater than 10 miles of highways (as recommended by TOI's highway commissioners' division). Additionally, SB 389 includes only those roads within the township and not those outside of the township that are maintained by the highway commissioner. It further contains a provision eliminating the current statutory limit on the size of any existing or new (consolidated) township to 126 square miles. It passed 36-9-3.

While it appears these bills have widespread support in the Senate, it is not clear what the House will do with them if and when they arrive there.

Here is a rundown of TOI's complete legislative agenda for the spring session, along with the status of each bill:

House Bill 4668 (*Currie, D-Chicago*) – makes a correction to the date when townships must file caucus nominees to the proper election authorities. **SUPPORT** Passed the House Executive Committee 4/14; passage stage in House.

House Bill 4967 (*McSweeney, R-Barrington Hills*); **Senate Bill 2464** (*Righter, R-Mattoon*) – allows for referendum to be put on the ballot by petition to abolish any unit of local government. **OPPOSE** 4967 held in House Rules Committee; 2464 heard in testimony-only hearing 4/13; held in Senate Local Government Committee.

House Bill 4968 (*Demmer, R-Dixon*); **Senate Bill 2462** (*Oberweis, R-Sugar Grove*); **Senate Bill 2412** (*Althoff, R-Crystal Lake*) – provides that all townships

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within a coterminous municipality may be consolidated by referendum. **OPPOSE** 4968 held in subcommittee; 2462 and 2412 heard in testimony-only hearing 4/13 and held in Senate Local Government Committee.

House Bill 4975 (Yingling, D-Round Lake) – makes it easier to abolish all townships within a county by citizens petition or county board vote. **OPPOSE** Held in House Rules Committee.

House Bill 4980 (Franks, D-Woodstock); **Senate Bill 2470** (Oberweis); **Senate Bill 2288** (Althoff) – removes current statutory provisions that serve as disincentives to consolidating townships within a county. **OPPOSE** 4980 held in House Rules Committee; 2470 and 2288 heard in testimony-only hearing 4/13 and held in Senate Local Government Committee.

House Bill 5041 (Stewart, R-Freeport) – Exempts projects under \$20,000 from the Prevailing Wage Act. **SUPPORT** Held in House Rules Committee.

HB 5522 (Ives, R-Wheaton; Sandoval, D-Chicago) – Requires units of local government with \$1 million budget or more to sponsor a website and post and keep current 14 different types of public information despite the fact that most of the information is already available elsewhere. **OPPOSE** Passed House; Senate Assignments Committee.

House Bill 5528 (Phelps, D-Norris City) – Makes MFT distribution to local governments a continuing appropriation and, therefore, not subject to being held up during a budget impasse. **SUPPORT** Held in House Rules Committee.

HB 5688 (Beiser, D-Alton) – Expands allowable length of semitrailers to 65 feet from 55 feet on township and other non-State highways. **OPPOSE** Held in House Rules Committee.

House Bill 5759 (Hoffman, D-Belleville) – Requires bidders on prevailing wage projects to qualify as “responsible bidders.” **OPPOSE** Held in House Rules Committee.

House Bill 5885 (Kifowit) – Removes the restriction limiting townships to no larger than 126 square miles. **OPPOSE** Held in House Rules Committee.

House Bill 5996 (Sullivan, R-Mundelein) – Grants additional authority over township highway

budgets to the township board. **OPPOSE** Held in House Rules Committee.

Senate Bill 388 (Bush-Conroy) – Provides process for consolidation of various types of townships with one another or with a coterminous municipality if authorized by all of the township boards and approved by voters. **NEUTRAL** Passed the Senate.

Senate Bill 389 (Morrison-Sente) – Allows a township board to put a question to voters on the ballot to abolish a township highway commission if the township has less than 15 miles of highways. **OPPOSE** Passed the Senate.

Senate Bill 2287 (Althoff) – Allows for citizen petition for a binding referendum to abolish a single township and further enumerates transfer of responsibilities to the county. **OPPOSE** Heard at testimony-only hearing 4/13; held in Senate Local Government Committee.

Senate Bill 2289 (Althoff) – Eliminates requirement that townships be no larger than 126 square miles, possess less than \$10 million in EAV, and allows for the county board to establish new township tax rates if consolidation occurs. **OPPOSE** Heard at testimony-only hearing 4/13; held in Senate Local Government Committee.

Senate Bill 2525 (Morrison) – Eliminates stipends for county and township assessors. **OPPOSE** Re-referred to Senate Assignments Committee.

Senate Bill 3181 (Oberweis); **House Bill 6098** (Demmer) – Allows, among other things, for a unit of local government to publish electronically certain information that now must appear as paid advertising in the local newspaper. **SUPPORT** SB 3183 held in Senate Local Government Committee; HB 6098 2nd reading in House.

House Bill 696 (Franks, D-Marengo, J. Cullerton, D-Chicago) – Extends the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act (Tax Caps) to all counties and allows for a zero percent increase (now CPI); exempts new property, bonded indebtedness and referendum-approved spending. **OPPOSE** Passed the House.



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