



# from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

**I**N EARLY JANUARY, the Township Officials of Illinois released an “updated” report by researcher Wendell Cox that dispels the myth that the reason for the higher taxes in the state is the fact that Illinois has more local government than any other state in the nation.

It seems like every year we hear renewed calls for abolishing some units of local government including townships, and consolidating them and their services into larger governments. The proponents of this always say that more governments make government less efficient and costs the taxpayer more. What they really should be examining is the money spent and not the number of governments.

The problem is that while abolishing or consolidating local government, including townships, is that it is made to sound appealing as a way to improve efficiency and provide relief for taxpayers. The evidence, as found in the Cox Report, says just the opposite. Efficiency is NOT measured by the number of local governments we have, but rather by the level of taxation and expenditures. Taxation and expenditures per capita are the only legitimate measures of government efficiency.

Why is it that smaller, local governments added together, levy lower taxes, spend less and borrow less per capita than larger governments? Much of it has to do with the most fundamental principles of democracy. Local voters are more in control of their governments when they are small. Elected officials (and employees) in smaller governments have the luxury of being able to interact much more directly with a larger percentage of the voters/taxpayer. Smaller governments are less complicated than larger governments and they don't have the layers of bureaucracy you find in most larger governments. All of this makes smaller local governments

more responsive to those they represent, which is the very justification of democracy.

I am not suggesting that elected officials in larger governments are any less dedicated or talented than those in smaller governments. Larger governments are just too difficult to control and the best evidence of this is their higher costs, higher taxes, and great debt.

The updated Cox Report for 2016 confirms exactly what we have known and said all along. Townships are close to the people they serve and are dedicated to providing effective, efficient programs and the help they need. It is my hope that the updated Cox Report will help citizens, officials, and the media see the difference that townships make. The facts and figures in the report speak volumes and show that local democracy in the form of township government is simply less expensive.

As you know, the abolition/consolidation effort has been an ongoing battle for years. Thomas Jefferson once said, “The price of liberty is eternal vigilance.”

Given the feelings in Springfield today, we all must continue to abide by Jefferson's words and remain vigilant.

If we want to keep township government, we have to fight for it. The updated Cox Report 2016 is another weapon in our arsenal when fighting those who want to eliminate us. Visit [www.toi.org](http://www.toi.org) and go to the download center to view, read, and print the updated Cox Report 2016. Take time to read the report and SHARE the information!

