



# from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

**W**ITH THE ARRIVAL of the New Year, many things changed or did not. The State of Illinois still does not have a budget, but, fortunately for township road districts, the legislature approved and the governor signed a bill in December that allows the Motor Fuel Tax money to once again begin flowing to townships. Just in time for bad weather!

Also, with the new year, came the release of the final report of the Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force. The task force was comprised of 25 individuals representing various components of local government, including townships, the General Assembly, and other agencies. The final report, as distributed, has 27 recommendations with six that directly affect township government. They are:

- Allow a township that is coterminous with a city boundary to be consolidated into the city by approval of a referendum.
- Remove the limit to the size of a township of 126 square miles, presumably to allow for multiple townships to be consolidated into a larger single unit.
- By majority vote of the county board or via citizen-led referendum, allow counties with fewer than 15,000 parcels and \$1 billion in Equalized Assessed Value, to dissolve all of the elected township assessors and multi-township assessment districts into one newly elected county assessor position and office.
- Allow counties that eliminate townships county-wide to maintain their existing form of county government (elected county board) rather than the current statutory requirement of changing to a commission form of government.
- Allows for use of a lower tax rate than the current rates when two or more townships are consolidated.
- Allow by referendum or county board vote the merger of a general township and road and bridge districts that maintains less than 25 miles of roads.

Some of these proposals are obviously controversial and will be met with opposition. It is assumed that all

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or some of these recommendations will make it into legislative proposals during the spring session. There could be some positive proposals put forward, too, but we will have to wait and see.

After receiving the report, I obviously was asked by various media for my comments and offered this statement:

“Illinois is indeed facing a fiscal crisis; there is not a person who disagrees. The Township Officials of Illinois have received the Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force’s report and we certainly endorse the idea of examining the status quo to determine if efficiencies are available that can save dollars. That being said, we are concerned by some of the findings.

Fewer units of government do not necessarily guarantee lower costs for taxpayers. If the core township services of providing public assistance, property assessment, and road maintenance were consolidated into larger government units, we run the risk of actually increasing costs to the taxpayers. Why? Because studies have shown that larger units of government spend more per capita. The number of government units in a state and its taxation per capita does not result in the elevated expense ratio that many assume.

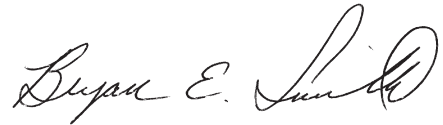
The best evidence is that Illinois has more government units than any other state, yet a number of states rank higher in taxation per capita, some with a small fraction of governments compared to Illinois.

I urge you to not assume that consolidation or contraction of townships will save the state money and improve any level of service. The case has simply not been made by the Task Force report. We believe it would be prudent to comprehensively examine this issue, rather than rushing to judgement.”

*Bryan E. Smith*  
Executive Director  
Township Officials of Illinois

So we are at a “wait and see” moment to find out if any of the recommendations are brought forth. Rest assured that TOI is keeping a close eye on this as the 2016 year progresses and we have already expressed our concerns to lawmakers. If anything happens, we will need the support and involvement of all township officials throughout the state.

Stay tuned!



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