



Legislative Report

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Townships avoid major damage before legislature adjourns

THE FIRST YEAR of the 97th Illinois General Assembly will go down as one that saw the Township Officials of Illinois withstand some major assaults on the future of township government. A number of major bombs were hurled our way throughout the deliberations of the spring session. And while in the end we took a couple of hits, a major outpouring of involvement in the legislative process from township officials throughout the state prevented some of the more damaging proposals from advancing in the final weeks of session.

In the waning days of the spring session, which wrapped up around midnight on May 31, Senate President John Cullerton elected not to call for a vote a measure contained in **Senate Bill 171** that would allow township boards to offer voter referenda to abolish township road districts and assessment offices state-wide. Instead, the House and Senate approved **Senate Bill 1907 (Sen. Martin Sandoval; Rep. Michael Madigan)** which allowed township boards in Cook County to offer referenda abolishing township road districts to the voters of that township, but maintaining authority and responsibility for such at the township level if approved. Many township supporters within the ranks of the General Assembly got behind SB 1907 as a more palatable alternative to many of the more onerous proposals that were hanging out there, including SB 171.

This all came on the heels of the defeat earlier in the spring of **Senate Bill 173 (Sen. Terry Link)**, which would have created a commission with unprecedented authority to wipe out certain local governments, and **Senate Bill 1811 (Sen. Michael Noland)** which would have effectively abolished all but eight township road districts in the state. In addition, the legislature ear-

lier approved **House Bill 268 (Rep. Jack Franks; Sen. Kwame Raoul)** which creates an advisory board of local government officials to recommend ways to improve efficiency in local government structure.

Major changes to newspaper publication requirements achieved

A breakthrough agreement reached between representatives of local governments and the Illinois Press Association resulted in passage the final week of session of major changes in the requirements for publishing public documents in local newspapers.

Under terms of the agreement and proposed legislation, the following changes will be made:

- Instead of publishing the entire Treasurer's Report (Public Funds Statement Publication Act) each year, townships will be required to publish a statement directing the reader to the location of an annual audit, if one is done
- Newspapers can charge no more per line than they charge the cheapest amount to their best customers (based on existing Minnesota law) to all local governments
- Cost per line for publication of assessment notices is decreased and amount of information contained therein reduced
- Reduces the frequency requirement from three insertions to one insertion for certain ordinances in the Municipal Code

In return for these cost reduction measures, local government groups have agreed to forgo seeking any further statutory changes for four years. At that time, all groups can re-evaluate the success of these steps and determine if publication is still a necessary requirement in the internet world.

Next month's Legislative Report will contain a recap of the entire 2011 spring legislative session.



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