



from your Associate Director

By Jerry B. Crabtree

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THIS PAST MONTH the new term began on May 17th, and we have gotten some calls at the TOI office asking just what the Township Officials of Illinois provides. My initial response is that it is a statewide association dedicated to promoting and protecting the local government closest to Illinois citizens—Township Government.

The second component of the conversation often begins with conveying the message that we are a professional organization formed over 114 years ago to preserve the statutory guidelines in place and those we are working on to preserve the township form of government that exists in 85 of Illinois' 102 counties. Our organization encompasses 1,428 townships or just under 11,000 elected township officials. The positions on the township board including the highway commissioner manage the community they preside in and ensure that at a minimum property assessment, general assistance, and the maintenance of over 72,000 miles of township roads are maintained.

The dues paid by your township to our organization, among many benefits, provide with 11 printed issues of the magazine *Township Perspective*. This publication is aimed at organizing your individual requirements for the township position that you hold as well as provide valuable information on township government in general. This becomes an important part of your position on the board as we attempt to provide a one stop shop component in print of what you should be or need to be thinking about as you progress through each year of your elected term.

The association works off a three-tiered approach to benefit our participating townships. Education, Lobbying and Promoting township government in Illinois. The most important component is that you become part of a statewide organization with a common goal of preserving township government. TOI serves as an information clearinghouse to its member townships and road districts, the media, state and federal elected officials and agencies as well as the public. The organization serves as an advisory organization not an enforcement authority for elected officials. The association's electronic presence and vast informational resources provided online at www.toi.org assist in efficient distri-

bution of valuable information.

Annually, a complete education (Township Government Education Network) program is provided. During normal years (non-pandemic years) the January *Perspective* magazine outlines the education programs for the entire year. Our thought is that you are given the schedule in January annually to request, if needed, authority to attend by your individual township boards and you can plan the year accordingly. Through online resources we are able to offer may educational opportunities to our members assisting in their duties and statutory responsibilities.

Since 2005 one continuous program is the association's website. This online environment has grown annually to meet the needs of our members and provides a multitude of information and resources benefiting you, our members. The website content changes all the time. Visit www.toi.org to see what we have added lately. There are many great resources in our download center and available forms. Remember that all documents in the download center are suggested forms and not required by statute. You may edit the form to accommodate the needs of the township.

For the new officials take some time and navigate through our website to see what publications you may want to purchase. Review the many documents located in our download center to assist you in your township position. Review the calendar of events and select some events to register and attend. Most of all, utilize the resources provided to benefit you and your position on the township board.

The value that we provide on a statewide basis is a collaboration of resources from everyone. Together with officials from urban and rural areas of the state we provide a solid force to help educate members of the Illinois general assembly and others on the importance of township government and what can be done to help make it better.

Take some time to review the many programs that we have to offer you. I am confident that together, we can help build even better townships across the current four-year term. Please contact our office if we can be of assistance to you. I look forward to working with you all.

