



Legislative Report

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Task force takes aim at township issues

NEARLY 12 MONTHS AGO, Illinois Lt. Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti took on the Herculean task of trying to streamline local governments in the state through creation of a task force she now chairs. As we enter the remaining days of 2015, that task force is preparing its final report with a series of proposals and recommendations, many of which are aimed at the function and structure of townships.

Known as the Local Government Consolidation and Unfunded Mandates Task Force, it is comprised of 25 individuals representing various components of local government, including townships, the Illinois General Assembly (8 members), and various state agencies that interact with local governments. It set about a series of monthly hearings to hear from the public with an aim of making suggestions to streamline local government and eliminate costly mandates imposed upon them by the state.

Those proposals will be formalized in the group's final report and presented to the General Assembly. The assumption is that many or most will find their way into legislative proposals that will be introduced in the spring session of the General Assembly that gets underway in January.

So far, here are the proposals from the task force that affect township government:

- 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 maintain less than 25 miles of roads.

Many of these proposals, obviously, are controversial and will meet with opposition. TOI and our legislative committee and other divisions will be reviewing each of them as they are incorporated into formal legislative proposals and offer our views.

Bear in mind that these recommendations are only a part of what will be the task force's overall final report. Other aspects will impact other units of government. And there will be some positive recommendations, as well. One of the suggestions is to eliminate the requirement for publishing certain information in a newspaper if it is available online. And there are other cost-saving measures for local governments to boot.

So as we head into the 2016 spring session, it appears much of our legislative agenda has been laid out for us. It will take a large, team effort on the part of all townships in the state to insure that any final action taken by the General Assembly next year be positive steps for township government in Illinois. 

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