

# GRASSROOTS

*The Official Newsletter of the Indiana Township Association*

FOURTH QUARTER 2010

## **Task force completes its charge**

In the summer of 2009, the Indiana Township Association created a task force to analyze current practices of trustees in an effort to enhance township government. Dubbed “Best Practices for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” the goal of the task force was to provide better service to the citizens of Indiana through the efficient use of tax dollars.

The task force consisted of a broad coalition of service providers, including representatives from the fire service, community organizations, and other local government associations. The group also included a representative from each of the four legislative caucuses. (A complete listing of the task force members can be found on page 6)

The group wrapped up their work in August of this year and agreed on a comprehensive list of recommendations to be implemented at the township level. Some of these recommendations consisted of “best practice” suggestions to be followed by townships through the state, while many others amounted to statutory recommendations.

The recommendations were “unveiled” during the 2010 ITA Educational Conference. Attendees had the opportunity to hear a presentation, comment and discuss the items in regional meetings.

During the November board meeting, the ITA Board of Directors considered comments and voted to accept the recommendations with minor changes. President Hart thanked the task force members for their time and directed that the recommendations be included as part of the ITA’s legislative agenda for the 2011 session of the Indiana General Assembly.

A complete outline of the task force recommendations (best practices and recommended statutory changes) can be found on the following pages.

## **Awards given for outstanding service**

### **TRUSTEE OF THE YEAR**

Each year the Indiana Township Association (ITA) awards one outstanding township trustee with the “Harold Gene Stoffer” Trustee of the Year award. The ITA proudly presented the 2010 award to Craig Beckley, trustee of Sparta Township, Dearborn County.

The distinguished award was announced during the ITA’s annual educational conference, held in Indianapolis on September 29<sup>th</sup> and is “given to a trustee who demonstrates passion and ingenuity for the job of trustee”, according to Executive Director Debbie Driskell. “For that, Craig Beckley certainly fits the bill” she said.

Beckley is serving his third term as Sparta Township Trustee. He is the Executive Director of Heart House, a local group seeking to address the problem of homelessness in five southeastern Indiana counties.

Heart House includes a sixty-bed shelter, two twelve-unit apartment buildings for transitional housing, and a nine-unit building for permanent housing. The agency also provides life skills in order to be reintroduced into society as productive citizens – all without the use of tax dollars.

Craig has helped the Heart House gain the reputation of helping the homeless and those who have given up hope of a better life.



***“Trustee of the Year” Beckley with Director Driskell (left) and President Hart (right)***

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# *Task force recommendations the basis for ITA legislative agenda*

As described in the article on page one of this newsletter, the ITA task force has completed its mission by issuing a comprehensive list of recommendations that will provide more efficient and effective services to Hoosiers. Some of these recommendations are in the form of “best practices” - guidelines that should be followed by trustees throughout the state. You will note that these best practices are preceded by the word “should”. Other recommendations would require statutory change in order for them to be implemented, and are clearly stated as such in the outline below.

The ITA Legislative Committee considered the recommended statutory changes (after the ITA board approved them) and determined to present them to members of the Indiana General Assembly for consideration. At this writing, the ITA has secured both a senate author and a house author - the first step in the long road to seeing these progressive changes made to Indiana statute.

Next, those sponsors will have language drafted with plans to file the bill and await its introduction and assignment to committee in the respective chambers.

## I. Township boards

- a. Statutorily cap township board salaries at \$5000, effective January 1, 2015
  - i. Recommend that, in townships with a population over 10,000 → no more than \$5,000/year
  - ii. With a population of 5,000 to 9,999 → no more than \$3,000/year
  - iii. Under 5,000 → no more than \$2,000/year
- b. Statutorily require board meetings to be held in a public place if one is available in the township
- c. Recommend the following for boards:
  - i. The board should meet monthly
  - ii. The trustee should present to the board a summary of receipts, expenditures and fund balances for review by the board
  - iii. The board should discuss any other issues of importance to the townships

## II. Banking of unused levies and cash balances

- a. Statutorily restore the ability of local units to bank unused levies
- b. Townships should maintain a reserve equal to one year of expenses to maintain sufficient cash balances in case of unexpected liabilities and to avoid costly borrowing costs.
- c. Townships should also develop a comprehensive financial plan when saving for large purchases so that the public is aware of the purpose for the reserves

## III. Nepotism

- a. Prohibit nepotism at all levels of government effective January 1, 2015
- b. Grandfather in employees in current positions as of July 1, 2011
- c. Exempt anyone receiving less than \$10,000 per year in compensation
- d. Applicable only to immediate family

## IV. Accessibility

- a. Every township shall make public the office address & phone number in at least one local phone directory
- b. Each township shall have an after-hour answering service that includes an emergency contact number
- c. Trustees shall respond to messages within 24 hours excepts weekends and holidays
- d. If a trustee does not accept a completed application, it is deemed to be a denial and thus eligible for appeal

- e. If a trustee does not respond within the statutory time limit, it is deemed to be a denial and thus eligible for appeal

**V. Accountability**

- a. For a trustee to receive rent payments, the space in the home must be utilized exclusively for the township office
- b. Trustees must justify, on their annual report, that rent paid to themselves is no more than it would cost to rent comparable square footage in the township, including utilities (if no comparable commercial office space exists within the township, comparison must be made to office space in the county seat)
- c. Township assistance guidelines must be approved by the township board no later than the last day of March on an annual basis
  - i. Failure to approve the guidelines for 2 consecutive years will result in the township having their civil levy, budget, and township board salaries frozen
- d. Current law requires the trustee to file the township assistance guidelines with the county commissioners. Provide that the failure to comply for 2 consecutive years will result in the township having their civil levy, budget and trustee salaries frozen.
- e. Trustee’s annual report shall be adopted by the township board and filed with the State Board of Accounts no later than March 1.

**VI. Other recommendations**

- a. Recommend that local township guidelines will substantially conform to the ITA’s Sample Township Assistance Guidelines
  - b. Recommend that all townships within a county develop the same procedural guidelines but allow each township to develop their own addenda for income guidelines, food allowances, non-food allowances, shelter allowances, etc.
  - c. Recommend that all trustees practice advocacy on behalf of their applicants to ensure that their needs are being met by any and all government or community-based aid programs available to them
  - d. Recommend that all trustees educate themselves through ITA conferences, State Board of Accounts training sessions, DLGF training sessions, and other similar educational opportunities
- Recommend that all trustees participate in 2-1-1 and other information and referral network services in their areas

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# [www.hoosiersfordemocracy.org](http://www.hoosiersfordemocracy.org)

Two years ago, the ITA founded the above named website for the purpose of gathering contact information from Hoosiers who are concerned that the Kernan-Shepard recommendations, if implemented, would diminish democracy in Indiana.

The ITA can then use the contact information to spread alerts when legislative action is being considered.

The website is not just for township trustees - but for board members, employees, friends, neighbors - basically ANYONE who wants to protect the future of local government in Indiana.

Please encourage others to visit the site and sign up to receive notices when the ITA needs help contacting legislators regarding bill action.

**Remember - the most important lobbyist in this fight is YOU!**

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### *“Awards” continued from page 1*

Kay Walker, trustee of Center Township in Muncie and the 2010 recipient of the award, presented the award and had this to say: “Craig takes great pride in his family, community involvement, and his work as trustee and at Heart House. He continues to look for opportunities to serve his community.”

### **TOWNSHIP OF THE YEAR**

The Indiana Township Association (ITA) proudly presented its “Township of the Year” award to Porter Township, Porter County, Ed Morales, Township Trustee.

Recently, Porter Township, under the leadership of Trustee Morales, expanded the resources of the food pantry through generous donations from the residents of Porter Township and the private business community. The food pantry accommodates the growing need of assistance with food and other basic necessities. The township also delivers low cost medications, thanksgiving baskets and works with the local Armory to distribute “Toys for Tots” to the township clients.



**Morales with President Hart**

In a move that saved taxpayers thousands of dollars, the township merged its two fire departments – Boone Grove and Lake Eliza – which made the larger department eligible for more federal grants.

After the merger and with upgrades in fire equipment and the building expansion project at station 2, the Insurance Service Office rating dropped from 9 to 6, which saved the average home owner \$200 - \$300 per year on their home owners insurance and the township as a whole, thousands of dollars.

In 2010, Porter Township announced plans to renovate five of its township cemeteries with private donations.

Each year, the ITA’s Awards Committee searches for townships that move “above and beyond” toward effective delivery of services in the most economical means possible. Additionally, the committee members seek to give recognition for innovation and progress.

Mary Hart, ITA President, stated that “Porter Township, Porter County, certainly represents the model township. The Trustee and its Board Members Kathy Sherman, Brian Roeske and Keith Hall have worked together to find efficiencies and the willingness to do whatever it takes to meet the needs of its citizens.”

### **BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

The Indiana Township Association (ITA), last week during its annual educational conference, bestowed the “Charles Bogden Memorial” Township Board Member of the Year upon Ron McVay of Center Township, Grant County.

The award was granted to Ron McVay, Chairman of the Township Board, for his work towards efficiency in township government.

Some of the examples that were cited included McVay’s research on grass fire trucks.

When bids for the truck came in, he believed that by breaking the bid into parts and re-bidding, the township could save money. Indeed, over \$15,000 was saved through this method.

In 2009, a new truck was delivered to the township to replace a 1986 pumper that no longer met safety standards. According to township trustee, Bryce Coryea, “Ron spent countless hours at his house calling fire truck manufacturers and searching the internet to find a new or used pumper that would fit into the township’s budget.”

“I believe that if it was not for Ron’s help and his extensive background in business, Center Township would not have been able to be as proactive as we have been,” said Trustee Coryea.



**Ron McVay**

### **EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR**

The ITA “Employee of the Year” was awarded to Michelle Junkins of Adams Township, Hamilton County.

Michelle was awarded the title for 2010 for her ten years of service to the township which was described as “above and beyond what is expected of her”. Mrs. Junkins was described in her nomination that she “never worries about the time – she simply does her work until the job is completed”.

The Trustee of Adams Township, Linda Williams, said, “She can do everything that I, the Trustee can do, which helps the office to run smoothly.”

Noted by the presenter of the award, Michelle works tirelessly by collecting food for the needy, investigating requests for township assistance and by performing the clerical duties of the township. She was awarded the ‘2009 Board Member of the Year’ by Indiana Main Street and has volunteered her time for the Indiana Township Association Conference Committee, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Sesquicentennial Committee for Sheridan’s 150<sup>th</sup> birthday.



**Michelle Junkins**

# NEWS from ACROSS THE STATE



On Saturday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, Lawrence Grossman was honored for an outstanding length of service as a Johnson Township Board Member. (LaGrange County)

He was first elected in January of 1966 and completes his 44<sup>th</sup> year on December 31, 2010. Mr. Grossman has been a solid voice of reason on this board, and his services will be greatly missed." (Pictured on the left is Lawrence Grossman with Johnson Township Trustee John Russell)



***Pictured: Trustee Frank Short, left, and the Washington Township Community Partners***

The Washington Township Trustee in Marion County recently held a reception to recognize its Community Partners for their contributions in providing critical services and support to the residents of the Township. Over 41 different organizations were recognized at the event. These organizations provide referrals in all areas of Direct Assistance; food, clothing, shelter, utilities, transportation and medical services.

Over the last four years, the Township has provided \$1.2 Million Dollars in Direct Assistance to its constituents. These Community Partners, through their referrals, have provided another \$2.2 Million Dollars in Direct Assistance for Washington Township residents.

Trustee Frank T. Short, in recognizing these people and organizations, stated that in addition to providing necessary assistance to our neediest neighbors, these Community Partners, through their efforts, were able to triple the amount of assistance which folks received while saving the taxpayers of Washington Township over \$2.2 Million Dollars. "The Board Members and I felt it was only appropriate at this time of year to say thank you to all of these valued members of our community."

*Please remember to send editorials and articles related to township government to the ITA. It's great to be able to share good news with others.*

## *In Memorial...*

**JOHN W. ROODA**, Ross Township Trustee, Lake County, age 65, passed away on October 21, 2010. He is survived by his loving wife and best friend of 38 years, Linda (nee Brown); and two sons: W. John Rooda of Dearborn Heights, MI and David M. Rooda of Ross Township. John served his community as a public official for over 34 years. He was elected to the Merrillville Town Council in 1976 and reelected in 1980. John was elected Ross Township Trustee in 1982 and reelected for six more terms. John also served the ITA previously in many capacities, including Vice-President.

We here in Clay Township have had a death of our former Trustee, **DAVID JOHNSON-BEY**. He was very active in our community and was on many Boards and committees. Our Fire Department and our office has stayed very close with the whole family after his four years of service as Trustee. His lite was extinguished at 2:30 this morning and he will be buried in our Township Cemetery next to family, something we have never done at the Trustee's office; so, we are very saddened for this to be our first.

*Submitted by: Christa Acton, Clay Twp. Trustee, Bartholomew County*

**DALLAS WINCHESTER II**, 48 years old, passed away on Thanksgiving Day after falling ill on November 6th at home. He was taken to the hospital and was diagnosed with an inoperable cancerous brain tumor and cancer in internal organs. He was past Township Trustee for VanBuren Township, Kosciusko County, a position in which his wife now holds, Libby Winchester.

*Submitted by Julia Goon, Prairie Twp. Trustee*

*The GRASSROOTS would like to pay tribute to township officials when they pass away. Please notify the ITA as you see fit at [ita@indianatownshipassoc.org](mailto:ita@indianatownshipassoc.org) or by calling the ITA office.*

## Watch out for tax fraud

*By Julie Roush, Fairfield Township Trustee*

*Many of you may have heard me talk about the various types of income tax fraud we've found committed by clients. It will be tax time again soon and I just want to pass on the types of fraud that we've found recently that you may want to look for.*

- 1. Friend, neighbor, relative of an adult receiving TANF, claiming children, (that are not theirs), as their own dependents and receiving thousands of dollars in EIC credit. (TANF recipients are not allowed to claim their children. They've passed their children on to other people to claim and they split the EIC credit.)*
- 2. Boy friend or girlfriend claiming the other roommate as a dependent, even though they're over 18 yrs old and receiving EIC credit.*
- 3. Unmarried couple filing separately, each of them claiming relatives as dependents, that do not live with them. They received almost \$3000 for EIC credit.*
- 4. Claiming friends relatives as their own relative. They received EIC credit.*
- 5. Client receiving IRS refund from H&R Block, but reporting they have no money, yet when we pull the transactions on their H&R Block debit card we find that they still have several thousand dollars unspent.*

*We have found that these types of fraudulent acts occur with or without professional tax consultants filing for them.*

# *ITA's Legislative Forecast*

## *2011 session of the Indiana General Assembly*

*By: Matt Norris, ITA Lobbyist - The Corydon Group*

Local governments in general, and township government in particular, will once again be a topic of discussion as the Indiana General Assembly convenes for the 2011 session on January 5<sup>th</sup>.

As has been the case over the last several years, there will most certainly be several bills filed dealing with the topic of local government reform, including township elimination. Governor Mitch Daniels has again made the issue of local reform a priority for his Administration, arguing for at least the elimination of township boards. His previous attempts to force consolidation at the local level have largely been unsuccessful, but with Republican control of both the House and the Senate, and with only two years left in his term of office, he will make a renewed push to reform local government in Indiana.

The Indiana Township Association has been proactive in addressing these latest attempts at consolidation. As you are well aware, the ITA Task Force finalized a series of comprehensive recommendations earlier this year that will allow trustees to better serve Hoosiers around the state. Many of these recommendations can be implemented at the local level without the approval of the General Assembly, but several of the items will require a change to the Indiana Code. These statutory changes have been bundled into legislation that will be carried by State Senator Dennis Kruse (R-Auburn) and Representative Tom Saunders (R-Lewisville). A summary of these recommendations can be found on Page 2 of this issue.

We have also spent the last several weeks meeting with key legislators in both the House and Senate to discuss our legislation as well as the onerous bills that we are sure to face during the coming session. Though there will undoubtedly be bills filed to reform and/or eliminate township government as a whole, we believe that the discussion will eventually focus on the future of township boards.

It is important that you contact your legislators and explain to them the important role played by township boards in your community. Your continued involvement with your legislators will prove invaluable during the upcoming session.

We would also urge to you attend the ITA's Legislative Conference in February, where you will receive the latest information on bills affecting township government and have a chance to talk directly to your lawmakers.

## ***Veterans' benefits easier to get...***

President Barack Obama has announced that the Department of Veterans Affairs, led by Secretary Shinseki, will begin to make it easier for Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to receive the benefits they need. For many years, Veterans with PTSD have experienced problems in receiving benefits because of requirements that they provide evidence proving a specific event caused the PTSD. Streamlining this process will help not just the Veterans of the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars, but generations of Veterans who have served and sacrificed for the country.

**For more information visit this link:**

**[http://www.disability.gov/benefits/other\\_benefits\\_programs/veterans\\_&\\_military](http://www.disability.gov/benefits/other_benefits_programs/veterans_&_military)**

# How Smaller Local Governments Reduce Taxes and Spending

By Wendell Cox

Indiana's townships are again threatened by abolishment, as legislators prepare to consider merging their functions into counties. As usual, proponents of abolition hold out the false promise of reduced spending and lower taxes. Their claims are based upon flawed before-the-fact academic studies and a blue-ribbon report that started from the assumption that abolishment was necessary.

The whole effort is based upon the "bigger-is-better" theory of government, that larger local governments are more efficient than smaller ones.

Abolition proponents seek to eliminate "duplication" of services. Yet, township fire departments, for example, have exclusive service areas, as do municipal fire departments. Adjacent township and municipal fire departments know their service areas and do not rush to answer the same calls.

Abolition proponents also assume that abolition will reduce the number of high paid management jobs. This is a recurring claim in the before-the-fact studies, but payroll expenses virtually always increase in the years following abolition.

The case for abolition is so fundamentally flawed that more than one press outlet has cited the prediction of a "statistical model" that abolishing township government would save more than \$425 million per year. That is more than the state's townships spent in 2007. The reality is that local government consolidations have generally resulted in *higher* taxes and *more* spending.

Spending per capita increased after local government consolidations in Jacksonville, Florida, Nashville, Tennessee and Athens-Clarke County, Georgia.

Canada has had particularly unfortunate experiences with government consolidations. Six Toronto area local governments were forced to consolidate by the province in the late 1990s, with claims of \$300 million annual savings. There was broad business support, though the residents of each consolidating jurisdiction had voted more than two-to-one against consolidation in advisory referenda.

Twelve years after the fact, even proponents are expressing second-thoughts. The city's major downtown business organization has noted that the anticipated savings did not occur and that the consolidated city would be paying the higher price of consolidation for years to come. Rather than reducing the number of employees, the city has added more than 4,000. As in neighboring Hamilton, a city with population of more than 500,000 that was also forced to consolidate, there are calls to restore the previous smaller governments. A forced consolidation in Halifax, Nova Scotia brought higher local taxes and spending per capita, despite the before-the-fact claims to the contrary.

But the problems of local government abolition and consolidation are not limited to far-away places. The favorite local government consolidation of proponents is right here in Indiana — Indianapolis. Mayor Ballard's *100 Day Report* in 2008 indicated that Indianapolis "has lived beyond its means in recent years, and it is on an unsustainable financial path." The consolidated city has managed to run up a net (unfunded) pension and post-retirement liability of approximately \$1 billion. This is *after* borrowing \$100 million in 2005 to pay down the unfunded pension liability. The obligation for approximately \$1 billion of future police and fire pensions has now been assumed by state taxpayers. Indianapolis is indeed a model. Indianapolis shows that large, consolidated governments can become "too-big-to-fail," leading to state bailouts.

It is important to recognize that none of the talented and commitment architects of the Indianapolis "Unigov" intended these consequences, nor did any of the subsequent political leadership. The challenge of maintaining sufficient financial control over larger governments is daunting.

***continued page 11***

# **“Counterpoint” to the State Chamber of Commerce’s “Point”**

*By: Deborah Driskell, ITA Executive Director*

Recently, the *Indianapolis Star* published a “point / counterpoint” regarding the elimination of township government. The “point” was made by Mark Lawrance, Sr. Vice President of the Indiana State Chamber of Commerce, while I was asked to write a 650 word “counterpoint” from the ITA’s perspective.

Mr. Lawrance’s “point” included these points: “townships are a bureaucratic relic of the Civil War era...simply outlived its usefulness”; “They overtax ...and then hoard funds”; “inefficient at providing emergency poor relief”; “inequitable patchwork of guidelines”...and so on. His complete article can be found on the *Indianapolis Star* website by doing an archival search with his name ([www.indystar.com](http://www.indystar.com)).

## **Here is the ITA “Counterpoint”:**

The value of township government is found in the vital services provided directly to its citizens at a comparatively low cost. Statewide, only 3% of your property tax dollar goes towards your township government, yet citizens receive poor relief, fire protection, parks and recreation services, community centers, cemetery maintenance and weed control. Transferring these duties to a county-run system will increase costs and diminish the level of service.

Proponents of centralizing government services would take the current system, where trustees are directly elected by the taxpayers, and replace it with a bureaucracy, where appointed officials make decisions but cannot be held accountable by the voters. No savings would be realized either. Trustees that make on average only a few thousand dollars a year would be replaced by bureaucrats earning more than \$30,000 annually plus benefits. For those that think centralizing services would save money, I would draw their attention to the dramatic cost increases that occurred when welfare oversight duties were transferred from the counties to the state.

Despite the best efforts to minimize costs to the taxpayers, it can be costly to administer emergency assistance. By law, trustees are required to conduct a full investigation of those seeking assistance. This review must be completed and a decision rendered within 72 hours. Compare that to the state-run food stamp program, which takes between 30-45 days to make a determination. In the meantime, while that family is waiting on bureaucrats to make a decision, who do they turn to for immediate assistance? Their township trustee, of course.

Relegating the township assistance program to a state or county program would likely ensure that “emergency assistance” becomes just another welfare entitlement program. While these other programs require a reexamination on a biannual or even annual basis, a trustee must evaluate a household’s needs every thirty days. Investigating a household requires administrative time that pays for itself in the fraud that is prevented and the baseless requests that are denied. The current system allows for creative problem solving to find other community resources to meet needs rather than relying solely on tax dollars.

Even though trustees provide this efficient and effective service on a routine basis, opponents of township government claim that inefficiencies exist within the system. They point to administrative costs as being excessive, yet fail to take into account the procedures followed by trustees and the important services provided at the township level- services that require actual manpower rather than a recurring cash benefit. Many townships operate food pantries, run clothing drives, or work with other community-based providers that can assist those in need. These efforts require significant investments of time yet don’t result in actual tax dollars being dispersed, driving up the ratio of administrative dollars versus actual cash distributed and giving the appearance of excessive administrative costs.

Townships also effectively provide fire protection for the unincorporated areas of the state. While the current system allows each community to decide what level of service is appropriate, a countywide system would require parity of services and a dramatic increase in costs. A uniform system of fire protection may sound good in theory, but it is simply unaffordable in most areas. That is why many Indiana communities continue to rely on volunteer-based services- volunteers who work tirelessly to raise money because they know that those funds will be kept in their community and in their township.

In many ways, townships act much like a typical Hoosier family when it comes to paying bills or making significant purchases. Townships will often save money for years before making a substantial purchase, such as a new fire truck. In addition, townships will also maintain sufficient cash reserves to ensure that the needs of the constituents are being met, even during difficult economic times. Ironically, critics point to these savings as evidence of excessive cash balances, completely missing how this is actually a responsible approach to governing.

# Indiana Emergency Medical Services Association Bulletin

The state Medicaid Advisory Committee recently announced reductions in Medicaid reimbursement to meet the ongoing budget shortfall for nearly all providers that have not already had them. The cuts will begin January 1, 2011. The state also announced an expiration of June 30, 2013, for the cuts.

The changes will apparently be as follows:

1. Adoption of the Medicare urban base and mileage rates for fixed wing ambulance services.
2. A 5% cut for ambulance services.
3. A 10 % cut for non-ambulance transportation services and transportation provided by family members.

IEMSA highly recommends you contact your state legislative representative and protest these reductions which will not only affect patient care but will ultimately impact local Emergency Medical Services at county levels as 911 dispatch centers will be hit with runs not taken by the current services causing stress on fire departments and county budgets.

## ***Additional information on mileage reimbursements***

Jim Freeman (President, Ambulance Billing Services, Inc.) also provided the following information:

For a detailed explanation by Page & Wolfberg, EMS attorneys: <http://www.pwwemslaw.com/content.aspx?id=511>  
The fractional mileage issue involves not only the vehicle odometer capabilities, but also the billing software used by the ambulance provider, or their billing service. Ambulance providers should verify that their billing software is capable of properly handling fractional mileage. Fractional mileage is required only for Medicare claims. Quality EMS billing software is capable of processing fractional mileage for Medicare, while rounding up for other payers. The capability will minimize the financial impact.

Jim is glad to answer any questions you might have on this subject. You can reach him at 1-877-293-3535.



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## **“How Smaller Local Governments ...” continued from page 8**

Where governments are smaller, elected officials are able to exercise more direct oversight, which greatly increases their ability to actually control spending. Elected officials are closer to the people in smaller governments and they are far more accessible to voters. Residents can actually reach their elected officials on the telephone or even in person, as opposed to dealing with a staff member whose career does not depend on attracting voters in the next election. In larger governments, voters have considerably less access to elected officials. Moreover, where there is less access for voters, well funded interest groups have greater access.

When governments are consolidated, differences between labor contracts, pay scales, operating procedures and service levels must be eliminated. It is not surprising that virtually always means that costs rise, because, for example, unions and employees are unwilling to accept lower pay and less time off, and residents are reluctant to accept lower service levels.

This is a particular risk in Indiana, where the abolishment of townships would ultimately lead to the eventual replacement of the many volunteer fire departments in more lightly populated areas with the career fire departments typical in urban centers. This could raise taxes statewide by \$400 million to \$1 billion annually.

If taxes are too high in Indiana, too many local governments are not the problem. Only 14 states have more governments per 10,000 people than Indiana. Yet, 32 states have higher taxes per capita. Indiana’s generally lower taxation per capita is, at least partially, the result of its more intense local government and the fact that local government is closer to the people.

It is time to send the ivory tower studies to the archives. The theoretical savings they predict are so disconnected from the reality as to be absurd. Virtually all of the “after-the-fact” experience shows that local government abolition and consolidation leads to *higher* not *lower* taxes and spending. In this reality, townships are not a liability, they are an asset to Indiana.

*Wendell Cox is principal of Demographia, an international consulting firm in St. Louis and is a visiting professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers, a national university in Paris. He has produced a number of reports on local governance and local government finance, including “Government Consolidation in Indiana: Separating Rhetoric from Reality” (for the Indiana Township Association).*

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## **Do we ever take the time to say “thank-you”?**

*One of the great services of township trustees that goes unnoticed is the use of community resources in order to meet our clients’ needs without spending direct relief dollars; but do we take the time to say “thank-you” to those who provide those services?*

*Following is a letter, written by Susan Parkinson, a case manager for Fairfield Township in Tippecanoe County (Julie Roush, trustee). Perhaps the letter will encourage you to say “thanks” to your local service providers. [The actual names have been redacted for this printing.]*

“Dear Dr. “Smith”;

I can hardly find adequate words to express how grateful I am that you are willing to donate services (tooth extractions) for my client, “Jane Doe”. When I shared the news with her this morning, she too was nearly speechless – except to say, “Are you kidding? You mean... no catch?” And then I saw tears well up in her eyes. It was, in fact, a “happy-sad” moment for me when I realized that getting teeth pulled could even be good news for a 20 year old girl.

Dr. Smith, I help applicants on a daily basis with rent and utility bills. They have to be quite “poor” by federal poverty guidelines, so almost without exception the bills they are requesting assistance with are merely the “tip of the iceberg.” Part of my job – often the most important part – is to look for and address underlying issues and make referrals to other agencies or find other forms of assistance for my clients who are struggling to pay for their basic needs. In Jane’s case, she falls between the cracks of public assistance because she makes too much money to qualify for some government programs (like Medicaid), yet she doesn’t earn enough to make ends meet and does not have any benefits. More often than not, medical care is neglected, which may free up resources in the short term – yet create even more problems for my clients, both medically and financially, in the long term. Jane has not been able to see a dentist in several years, and as a consequence now needs three teeth pulled.

My hope, Dr. Smith, is that with your intervention and assistance, Jane can get back on track and take care of her teeth more properly. She’s a sweet girl with a beautiful smile. Thank you again for giving her something to smile about.”

# “Thank you” to the ITA Task Force Members

*On behalf of the ITA Board of Directors, the GRASSROOTS thanks the members of the ITA Task Force, who over the course of the past year, dedicated their time and energy to the evaluation of the future of township government and how it might be more efficient and effective in the delivery of services.*

Senator Richard Young (D)

Senator Travis Holdman (R)

Representative John Bartlett (D)

Representative Cleo Duncan (R)

Joe Smith, Trustee, Jefferson Township, Wayne County

John Henry, Trustee, Pleasant Township, Allen County

Julia Goon, Trustee, Prairie Township, Kosciusko County

Jean P. Lushin, Trustee, Center Township, Howard County

Steve Anderson, Trustee, Trustee, Franklin Township, Washington County

Dan Combs, Trustee, Perry Township, Monroe County

Frank Mrvan Jr., Trustee, North Township, Lake County

Mary Hart, Trustee, Pigeon Township, Vanderburgh County, ITA President\*

Bob Boyer, Trustee, Sugar Creek Township, Hancock County

Lula Patton, Trustee, Pike Township, Marion County

Debbie Driskell, Trustee, Delaware Township, Hamilton County, ITA Executive Director

Matt Norris, ITA Lobbyist, Corydon Group\*

Steve Buschmann, ITA Attorney, Thrasher, Buschmann, Griffith and Voelkel

John Spinks, ITA Associate Director

Stan Rice, Associate Member, Lupke Rice Insurance

Katrina Hall, Indiana Farm Bureau

David Botorff, Association of Indiana Counties

Mark St. John, St. John & Associates

Emily Weikert, Community Harvest

Tim Deckard, Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association

Lucinda Nord, Indiana Association of United Ways

Cathy Serrano, Human Resources/Risk Management Attorney

Indiana Fire Chiefs' Association

## IRS PROBLEM WITH CELL PHONES IS RESOLVED!

*The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) reports in its October 8, 2010, newsletter:*

### President Signs Legislation Removing Cell Phones from Listed Property

President Obama signed legislation on September 27, 2010, that would remove employer-provided cell phones from the definition of listed property under the tax code, relieving state and local governments from the extensive and costly administrative burden and record-keeping requirements that have been necessary to identify and track calls made from these phones. The change in law can be found in Section 2043 of the Small Business Jobs and Credit Act of 2010 (Public Law No. 111-240); it is effective for tax years beginning after December 31, 2009. The GFOA, along with other associations representing state and local governments, have been advocating for this change to the tax code for several years.

Thanks goes to Curt Coonrod for supplying this information to the GRASSROOTS!

# **Your ITA Executive Committee**

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## **Mark Your Calendars**

**2011  
Educational Conference**

**September 25-28**

**Sheraton Hotel  
Indianapolis**

You can receive timely updates IF we have your correct email address. If you are in doubt, email us today at [ita@indianatownshipassoc.org](mailto:ita@indianatownshipassoc.org)

Some of our members change email addresses frequently. One way to save the hassle is to get a "hotmail" or "yahoo" account - it's free!

### ***GRASSROOTS***

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*John Spinks*

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*Barbara Smithey*

## **FREE 'HOUSING SERVICE'**

A free housing service that helps people find a room, house or apartment that best suits their needs. Search by rent amount, accessibility features, housing vouchers and more. Also has information about moving costs, assisted living facilities, help for people who are homeless and financial assistance to help pay rent.

**For more information visit this link:**

**<http://www.disability.gov/state/indiana/housing>**

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Vehicle Types	ABS	Damage Threshold	Preset Weather			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cruiser</li> <li>Ambulance</li> <li>BSPolice</li> <li>Cruiser</li> <li>FireEngine</li> <li>FireTruckLadder</li> <li>MovingTruck</li> <li>Police</li> <li>SedanWhite</li> <li>Sheriff</li> <li>TractorTrailer</li> <li>TransitBus</li> <li>VanWhite</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	5	Clear	Rain	Snow	Fog

Drivers of emergency vehicles put their lives on the line every time they get behind the wheel. As a member of the Indiana Public Employers' Plan, you can help them complete those runs with fewer accidents with our on-site driving simulator training. IPEP offers this training exclusively to its members as part of its comprehensive safety and loss prevention program. You provide a space in your parking lot for our 36' trailer, and we'll do the rest to keep your drivers safer and reduce your insurance claims. Call Matthew Riehm at (260)349-8071 to schedule your department's training session.



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# *SSI Program*

## Does your Township participate in the SSI Program?

What a great way for a township to recycle taxpayers dollars while benefiting the township with their Township Assistance budgets of all sizes.

For many townships, Township Assistance is one of , if not the, most costly duty. The State of Indiana granted a contract with the ITA to aid in the reimbursement of Township Assistance incurred by the townships.

This is done through the SSI Reimbursement Program.

The ITA Office manages the intake of a recipient's initial settlement from the Social Security Administration. Townships may contract with the ITA to recoup assistance dollars given during the interim period pending SSI eligibility.

***Contact the ITA Office on how your township can start participating in the SSI Program.***

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If your township already participates in the SSI Program, there have been changes to the claim form and the completion of the claim form, effective 11.22.1010.

Your township should have already received the new information.

***Contact the ITA if you have not received the new changes or visit [www.indianatownshipassoc.org](http://www.indianatownshipassoc.org) under SSI Forms.***

317.813.3240 Phone

317.813.3187 Fax

[ita@indianatownshipassoc.org](mailto:ita@indianatownshipassoc.org) Email

*IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER...*

# *ITA 2011 Legislative Conference & Convention*

***February 6-8***

*Sunday - Registration*

*Monday - Business meeting, election of officers, legislative briefing*

*Tuesday - lobby day at the statehouse, reception for legislators*

## *New Township Officials' Training*

*February 9*

*Hilton Indianapolis Hotel & Suites*

*Registration Packets Available at*

*[www.indianatownshipassoc.org](http://www.indianatownshipassoc.org)*

*or call 317.813.3240*



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