

# GRASSROOTS

*The Official Newsletter of the Indiana Township Association*

FIRST/SECOND QUARTER 2009 - DOUBLE ISSUE!

## 2009 Session Wrap-up

By: Matt Norris

The 2009 Session of the Indiana General Assembly came to a close on April 29<sup>th</sup>- sort of. With the conclusion of the regular session, we are pleased to report that none of the Kernan-Shepard proposals to consolidate local government units, including the proposal to eliminate township government, were successful this year. However, because lawmakers were unable to agree on a biennial budget, the Governor will be forced to call legislators back in the next couple of weeks for a special session in order to pass the two-year spending plan for the state. Though the budget is the only piece of legislation that *must* be enacted during the special session, any other issue can be considered, including the Kernan-Shepard proposals.

But before we turn to what may or may not happen this summer, let's revisit the last four months. As you all know, legislation was introduced that would have enacted the recommendations stemming from the Governor's Commission on Local Government Reform, more commonly known as the Kernan-Shepard Commission. Though a variety of bills were filed in both the House and the Senate, it became clear early on that five Senate bills would be the primary vehicles for these proposals:

- SB 348- Library consolidation
- SB 452- K-S election provisions
- SB 506- County consolidation
- SB 512- Elimination of townships
- SB 521- School consolidation

As originally introduced, SB 512, authored by Senator Connie Lawson (R-Danville), would have eliminated township government effective January 1, 2013 and transferred township duties to the county executive. To assist in the transition, the bill would have created a township assistance transition advisory committee in each county, consisting of local trustees and representatives from other community service organizations. The committee would have only six months to develop a plan to deliver township assistance countywide before the state was given the authority to develop a plan of their own. SB 512 would also have transferred fire protection responsibilities to the county and created a public safety planning board in each county to coordinate public safety services.



*North Township Trustee, Frank Mrvan Jr., testifies before the Senate Local Government Committee*

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, the Senate Local Government Committee heard SB 512 as well as SB 482, this year's attempt to eliminate township government in Marion County and consolidate the township fire departments into the Indianapolis Fire Department. Your ITA lobbying team met with each of the committee members in the weeks leading up to the committee hearing and provided them with information explaining the important role played by Indiana's township trustees. The ITA also worked with representatives from the Indiana Volunteer Firefighters Association.

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ciation, Indiana Fire Chiefs Association, and other community organizations in preparing testimony for the committee. A special word of thanks to Frank Mrvan, Jean Lushin, and Christina Holtzleiter for their willingness to testify in support of township government after Debbie Driskell started things off.

After much consideration and discussion, the Local Government Committee significantly altered SB 512 before passing the bill out of committee on a 9-2 vote. The version passing the committee kept township government in place but would have required county approval of township budgets. It also would have banned the hiring of relatives in township offices but would have “grandfathered” in current employees. This version was agreed to after the Committee defeated an amendment that would have kept township trustees but eliminated township boards. The Committee also significantly changed SB 482, again keeping all township officials in place in Marion County and only calling for the consolidation of fire departments in the county. That bill was approved on a close 6-5 vote.

As SB 512 moved to the Senate floor for potential amendments, we worked with Senator Dennis Kruse (R-Auburn), a former trustee and strong supporter of township government, on an amendment that would allow the county to review and make recommendations on township budgets, but would leave the ultimate responsibility of budget approval to the elected township officials. A separate amendment was filed by Senator Brent Waltz (R-Greenwood) very similar to the language that was defeated in Committee calling for the elimination of township boards. Despite our best efforts, Senator Waltz’ amendment was adopted while Senator Kruse’s amendment was defeated.

With these changes, the Senate had before them a bill that would have kept trustees in place, eliminated township boards, and would have subjected township budgets to county review and approval. We spent the next 24 hours talking to members of the Senate and explaining the important role played by township board members, but the bill was ultimately approved on a close 28-22 vote. SB 482, on the other hand, was defeated 24-26.

Though disappointed that the bill passed the Senate, we were encouraged that SB 512 had been significantly watered-down from the introduced version, as had the other Kernan-Shepard bills (the school consolidation bill even failed to make it out of committee). This sent a clear message to the Democrat-controlled House of Representatives that the Governor’s local government consolidation agenda lacked broad support, even in the Republican-controlled Senate.

SB 512 was assigned to the House Committee on Government and Regulatory Reform, along with the other remaining K-S bills. In an effort to give the proposals a fair hearing, Representative John Bartlett (D-Indianapolis), Chairman of the Committee, amended all of the K-S bills as originally introduced into SB 452 and held a hearing on the proposals as a whole on March 10<sup>th</sup>. Again, the ITA organized testimony for the committee hearing, and after hours of testimony and numerous procedural motions, the Committee adjourned without formally taking action on the bill. The bill, along with the other K-S bills, never passed out of Committee and was thus dead for this session.

That is not to say that there weren’t efforts made to revive this language as session continued. Several amendments were filed on other bills during the last few weeks of session that would have eliminated township boards and required county approval of township budgets. An amendment was also filed calling for fire consolidation in Marion County. However, these amendments were never adopted, and none of the local government consolidation proposals were enacted this session.

In fact, a relatively few number of bills were passed by the General Assembly this year that affect township government- quite a change from the last couple of years. An omnibus tax bill that would have made several technical changes to local government units, HB 1447, also failed to pass on the last night of session. This bill would have made changes to the budgeting timeline for local units and also included certain provisions requested by individual townships. It is expected that at least some of the provisions from this bill will be debated during the special session.

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Here is a brief summary of pertinent bills that were enacted into law this session:

- **HB 1205**- Provides that an employer may not discipline an employee who is a member of a volunteer fire department and who is injured or absent from work because of an injury that occurs while the employee is engaged in emergency firefighting or emergency response activities.
- **HB 1230**- Allows the officers of a political subdivision publishing notice to publish in only one newspaper in the political subdivision (instead of two newspapers), if only one newspaper is published in the political subdivision. After December 31, 2009, allows a newspaper or qualified publication to annually increase the basic publication charges that were in effect during the previous year by not more than 2.75%.
- **HB 1432**- Requires the county auditor to distribute local income tax revenue to other taxing units not later than ten working days after the county treasurer receives the distribution from the state.

As previously mentioned, the legislature must reconvene this summer in order to pass the State's biennial budget, and they can consider any other piece of legislation. Legislative leaders recently announced a timeline for the special session, which is expected to formally begin on June 15<sup>th</sup>. We fully expect the proponents of government consolidation to make some effort to revive the Kernan-Shepard proposals, and will continue to work with our allies in the General Assembly to ensure that they are not enacted.

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## *What is going to happen next? What can we be doing?*

*The answer to the first question is almost impossible to predict - other than to say "something" because we have too much evidence that this fight is far from over. There are rumors that there might be attempts to revive Kernan-Shepard provisions during the special session. If we hear anything of certain, you will be alerted.*

*The second question is easy: More of the same. More contact with legislators; more educating the general public as to what they have to lose under Kernan-Shepard; more rallies; more signatures at [hoosiersfordemocracy.org](http://hoosiersfordemocracy.org)...*

*The ITA is preparing for one of its greatest undertakings to date: a formal task force whose mission will be to develop best practices for townships. These "best practices" will likely take the form of proposed legislation next session. We must reform ourselves or look to be reformed or eliminated!*

*In other words, we must reform ourselves from the inside out! The Task Force for Township Reform will not only include trustees from varied demographics, but also several state legislators and leaders from other "service delivery" organizations.*

*Please watch your mail for details as they unfold as we will prepare a formal announcement once the Task Force is ready to commence.*

## *Reform is coming one way or another.*

**YOUR ITA LOBBYING TEAM**  
**Debbie Driskell, Executive Director**  
**John Spinks, Associate Director**  
**Matt Norris, The Corydon Group**

# “Hoosiers for Democracy” Rallies prove successful

*Right to the very end of session, trustees were eager to hold rallies in order to educate the public and motivate others to get involved in the destiny of local government in Indiana.*

*The public and the press were invited to the rallies along with elected officials and volunteer firefighters from across each county.*

*The rallies were held in a wide variety of locations, including Ft. Wayne, South Bend, Elkhart, Plymouth, Bloomington, Warsaw, and Camden. The events inspired attendees to sign the on-line petition at [www.hoosiersfordemocracy.org](http://www.hoosiersfordemocracy.org) and to personally contact their legislators, making the rallies worthwhile.*

*The ITA expects to hold similar rallies later this year in preparation of the next session of the General Assembly. If you are interested in hosting a rally in your county, please contact the ITA.*

*The hosts of the rallies this winter and spring are to be commended. Several of the rallies were initiated by just one local trustee who wanted their community to be educated before it was too late to save local government.*

## Protect Your Pockets: Managing Your Finances after a Job Loss

*By: Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita*

In the last few months, unemployment rates across the country have spiked. Here in Indiana, we've seen numbers as high as 18 percent in some counties.

While I believe Indiana's recovery will be strong and lasting thanks to our healthy work ethic and innovative spirit, the current reality is that with many employers responding to the economic downturn, layoffs are often out of an employee's control. While losing one's job can be both emotionally and financially draining, there are steps dislocated workers can take to help keep their finances on track during their time of unemployment.

Among the first things workers should do after a job loss is file for unemployment benefits with the Department of Workforce Development (DWD). If they were laid off or lost their job through no fault of their own, they may qualify for unemployment benefits that cover up to 26 weeks, sometimes more when combined with federal benefits and possible extensions. The DWD also has WorkOne Centers located around the state that help unemployed workers update their resume, practice their interview skills, look for jobs and obtain professional training.

Another important action for dislocated workers is to reevaluate their monthly budget and short-term monetary needs. They should assess how they spent their money before and which of their current monthly expenses are fixed (i.e. mortgage payments) versus those they can adjust based on not having their regular income (i.e. entertainment). Unemployment benefits should be factored into their adjusted budget to determine how long they can make ends meet with those payments combined with what they already have in savings. In general, dislocated workers should try to reduce spending whenever possible and make a plan for the money they do have.

Visit [www.IndianInvestmentWatch.com](http://www.IndianInvestmentWatch.com) to download the free brochure “Job Dislocation: Making Smart Financial Choices after a Job Loss” and to access additional money management tips.

## LONG HAUL PROTECTION FOR HOOSIER WORKERS.

More than 1000 cities, towns, counties and government organizations protect their civil servants with public entity insurance plans administered by Downey Insurance. For more than 30 years, our comprehensive programs have provided liability, workers compensation and professional liability coverage for Indiana's local communities and specialized markets.



**DOWNEY**  
**INSURANCE**

*Protecting Those Who Serve®*

For more information about how Downey Insurance can help you with your public entity insurance needs, please contact your insurance provider or call us at 1-800-382-8837 or visit us on the web at [www.downeyins.com](http://www.downeyins.com).

# Community Work Experience Program - IMPACT

IMPACT stands for Indiana Manpower Placement and Comprehensive Training. It is the employment and training section of the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, Division of Family Resources. The goal of IMPACT is to help people on public assistance achieve self-sufficiency.

IMPACT operates the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP). This program places IMPACT clients into unpaid job positions. The participant gains work experience and employment skills.

Township Trustees may act as the Employer...

## What are the benefits?

### To the Employer:

- Gains the services of an additional person at no cost to the township.
- Performs a community service by helping a public assistance recipient move toward financial independence.
- Has the opportunity to hire the IMPACT client as a permanent trained employee.
- Reduces client employment barriers through the provision of IMPACT supportive services.
- Gains a client trained in general employer expectations.

### To the IMPACT client:

- Gains work experience.
- Attains and improves key work skills and attitudes needed for future success.
- Benefits from a positive role models in the workplace and increases self-esteem.

For more information on the IMPACT program and the role a trustee might play, contact Tammy Green at 317.417.9552 or tammygreen@arboret.com

**Do you have questions or problems with the  
Family & Social Services “Modernization” Program?  
Perhaps you have a client who is having trouble with their food stamps!**

**Townships have a liaison at FSSA!  
You may call Matt Schomburg at 317.910.5803**

## Did you know?.....

### IC 5-22-22-10

#### Exchange of property between purchasing agency and governmental body

Sec. 10. (a) A purchasing agency may exchange property with another governmental body upon terms and conditions agreed upon by the governmental bodies as evidenced by adoption of a substantially identical resolution by each entity.

(b) A transfer under this section may be made for any amount of property or cash as agreed upon by the governmental bodies.

*As added by P.L.49-1997, SEC.1*

# *In Remembrance...*

*We lost several township officials (past and present) last year.*

*Gerald Gilles - Shelby/Shelby - Trustee and Past ITA President  
Charles Bowers - Washington/Ripley - Trustee  
Lillian Wallpe - Laughery/Ripley - Clerk  
Jack Spears - Mount Pleasant - Board Member  
Suzanne Nicholson - Board Member  
Bos Wise - High/Grant - Board Member  
Ron Kincaid - Delaware/Hamilton - Board Member  
Patricia Clark - Cedar Creek/Allen - Trustee  
Raymond Henry - Pleasant/Allen - Board Member, former trustee  
Kenneth Fark - Cass/Dubois - Trustee  
Clyde RAndall - Washington/Dearborn - Trustee*

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## *Cemetery restoration earns award*

Zack Orndorff, a Boy Scout, needed a project to achieve his ranking as an Eagle Scout. Zack asked Adams Township, Ripley County Trustee, Ed Gindling, if he could do restoration of the township cemetery as his project. Trustee Gindling applied for and received a small grant from the Ripley County Community Foundation for the restoration work. Zack asked a local surveyor to help him establish the legal boundary lines as there was no legal deed for this cemetery which was established in the 1800's. The surveyor donated his time in establishing the cemetery's boundaries. With the help of his father, mother and brother, Zach was able to uncover gravestones that had sunk in the ground and fix the stones that were leaning or had fallen. He placed wooden fence rails on the four corners and planted small bushes for the landscaping. Zach used his creative skills and worked very hard to make improvements to the cemetery in the community where he lives. Zach, pictured here with Trustee Ed Gindling, received his Eagle Scout ranking on Sunday, December 28, 2008.



# “On your mark... get set... GO!”

*By: Susan Parkinson, Caseworker - Fairfield Township Trustee's Office (Tippecanoe County)*

As a caseworker at the Fairfield Township Trustee's Office, sometimes I imagine that I'm the host of a TV reality show that's something akin to a scavenger hunt. And when clients leave our office with their lengthy checklist in hand, eyes sometimes gleaming with excited anticipation – sometimes glazed over in shock – I'm tempted to say to them, “and the first one back in 72 hours with everything on their list wins! Are you ready? On your mark... get set... GO!”

Obviously, I don't say this. But when clients come to the Trustee's office for assistance – usually for help with rent or utilities - sometimes I find myself apologetic, even embarrassed, as I shove form after form under their noses for them to sign or have filled out. I explain, as clearly and as kindly as I can, the reasons we ask for the information that we do. Sometimes I try to lighten the mood with a little well-timed humor. But for our clients, the Trustee's office is often a last resort. They're desperate. They're tired – both emotionally and physically. They're frustrated and humbled by their present circumstances, and embarrassed to ask for help. Often, they have waited until the last possible moment, exhausted all other options, and they need help – *now*. And now we're asking nosy questions, prying into their finances – and, to add insult to injury, asking them to produce a mountain of paperwork, preferably before their first appointment.

In addition to the usual documentation required by nearly all offices, public or private, that offer financial assistance (birth certificates, SS cards, picture IDs, signed lease agreement, proof of income for the past 30 days), our checklist includes such things as state and federal tax returns, bank statements, and printouts from other offices of the benefits that our clients are receiving. If they are not receiving assistance that they might be eligible for, we ask them to apply for it. In addition, we have forms that are exclusive to this office, based on Indiana Code as well as the Township Standards that require information and signatures from landlords, doctors and employers. We try to expedite this process for our clients when possible, making phone calls and faxing forms so that we can “divide and conquer” the list. We assure our clients that the list need not be completed by their initial appointment, usually made within 48 hours of their picking up an application. We advise them that we can give them an additional 72 hours (three working days) to complete the task – and that, under some circumstances we can even give them an additional 72-hour extension beyond that. Indiana Code is very specific regarding assistance requirements – as well as reasons for denial. We are bound by that code. But we also know that there is an optimum amount of effort we can expect from our clients that gives us the information we need and the reassurance that taxpayers money is not being wasted - without completely discouraging our clients. Most importantly, we want to be able to actually help those clients who truly need our assistance in a timely fashion, before they are evicted or their lights are shut off.

Even still, sometimes our clients complain. Sometimes they don't show up for their appointments. Why? Our clients often lack vision and organizational skills. They might not keep receipts. They might not have a car – or the extra cash for gas or for public transportation to gather the documentation we require. If their goal is to “get by” in life with minimal effort, they might even consider the process itself to be too much work! In any case, the checklist that we give to our clients – with items they need to provide to our office – can be overwhelming.

But what is the purpose of this assignment? If it's not to weed out the weak-spirited and bring the remainder of the applicants to their knees in gratitude for our benevolence (which it is not), then what *is* our goal? What are we looking for in the mountain of documentation that we request?

The first thing we look for is *evidence of need*. How much income have they received in the past 30 days? What expenses have they incurred in the past 30 days? What recurring expenses do they have? How many people are in the household? Are there extenuating circumstances that have created an emergency need? Are there medical issues that inhibit our clients' ability to support themselves? We are tasked, by Indiana Code, to attend to the needs of the “poor” in Fairfield Township. As administrator of township public assistance, the township Trustee is responsible for the “oversight and care of all poor individuals in the township.” We determine that need through review of documents from employers, Social Security Administration, the Department of Workforce Development, and other sources.

We also look for *evidence of effort*. Have they maintained gainful employment? If not, why? Have they applied for government programs that they are eligible for? Have they complied with those programs? Have they

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exhausted all other avenues of assistance – including family members? Our “motto,” if you will, is that we will work as hard as our clients do to take care of their basic needs. Of course there are those clients who are either temporarily or permanently disabled, and who are incapable of taking care of themselves. Some of them need to be referred to other agencies for mental health assessments or for assistance that is beyond the scope of our office.

We look for *evidence of wasted resources*. Have they paid for their basic needs first? Have they made unnecessary purchases? Are they paying for services that are considered by our Standards to be unnecessary – like cable TV, cell phone bills, rent-to-own items or storage units? This is a tough one. While we are not personally judgmental of these purchases (and I know I would rather go for a day without food than go for a day without my cell phone), we are again bound by Indiana Code to view any purchases or payments that are not basic needs as “wasted resources.” Such expenses might be deducted from our amount of assistance. Moreover, we would certainly hesitate to pay an applicant’s rent when we see a big-screen TV purchase on last month’s bank statement. Major evidence of “wasted resources” is even a legitimate reason for denial of assistance. We also consider the time frame. If a client is suddenly faced with a huge medical expense or an unexpected job loss, we don’t necessarily hold him accountable for frivolous purchases made in the weeks or months prior to that event.

Finally, we look for *evidence of truthfulness*. Have they committed welfare fraud? Have they answered questions (in our application and in the interview) truthfully? If applicants have “altered facts” for the sake of receiving Food Stamp or TANF benefits and have been convicted of Welfare Fraud, we must deny them. If they have been denied assistance or sanctioned by any government agency for fraud or for non-compliance, we are also bound by Indiana Code to deny assistance. Just as importantly, we expect our clients to tell *us* the truth. If they knowingly and willfully falsify information, misrepresent the facts or withhold vital information, they may be denied. Such deceit is hard to prove and often overlooked, of course – and sometimes the better course of action is simply to give the applicant an opportunity to “change his story” and use the experience as a learning opportunity.

The Fairfield Township Standards and Guidelines contain 25 pages of detail about the application process, assistance provisions, verification procedures, eligibility determination, and reasons for denial. In addition, there are over 60 printed pages of relevant Indiana Code, on which our Standards are based. While our assistance guidelines are lengthy and specific, they are subject to interpretation – both at the individual township level as well as the individual caseworker level. It would be relatively easy to find legitimate reasons to deny assistance to the majority of our applicants – if we wanted to. We don’t. For the sake of our clients, we try to process each case in 7 to 10 days, start to finish. In an emergency, we are able to make determinations in less than 24 hours. And when clients are focused and make the effort to bring everything on their “checklist” to their first appointment, we will sometimes make a determination that same day. Do we get all of the facts all of the time? No. Are we sometimes deceived? Undoubtedly. Do we let personal judgments and interpretations guide the process? We try not to.

My personal perspective is that I want to help every one who walks into the Trustee’s office. Sometimes that means referring them to another agency. Sometimes it means that they have to “jump through all of our hoops” – just to be denied. But I always issue the denial with compassion and a list of other options. Denying assistance to a client, at any stage, is the hardest part of my job. But every denial holds within it the opportunity to learn more about other agencies and other resources in this community so that I am better prepared to help the next client. And when I *am* privileged to assist a client and I know that they and their family will have a roof over their heads or their lights on – for at least the rest of this month – it gives me the greatest satisfaction.

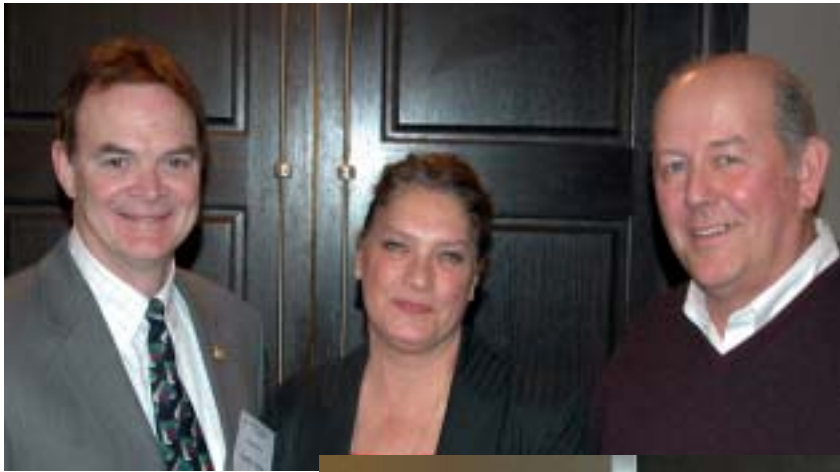
I try, too, to look at the bigger picture. Why is this client having trouble maintaining a job? Why are they constantly running out of money? When I am able to, I try to go the extra mile for my clients. We *all* do. We assist clients with Social Security Disability appeals. We act as Representative Payees for clients who receive Social Security benefits and need help managing their finances. We write job referral letters. We refer clients to the Tippecanoe Community Health Clinic for prescription assistance. We call banks and beg for overdraft fees to be reversed. We call utility companies and beg for late fees and deposits to be waived or reduced. I recently helped a client - who used a pair of pliers to pull her own rotten teeth - get free dentures.

The Trustee’s office is not a reality TV show. But it *is* reality. It’s *harsh* reality. We see clients sometimes at the lowest point in their lives. Our job is not to belittle or berate them or to add an extra burden. Our job is to help raise them up.

# Legisative Reception 2009



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# Global Recession Brings PERF Opportunities and Cost Cutting

While economists look for signs of an end to the global recession, the Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF) has found attractive opportunities despite difficult market conditions.

A case in point is a well-timed trip to Hong Kong in September that resulted in a new private equity secondary investment already valued at \$7 million more than when purchased. The trip not only illustrates the opportunities available in today's market, but underscores the power of face-to-face contact in finding and evaluating investment opportunities that directly benefit the PERF investment portfolio.

"We have a cautious approach to investing that includes meeting fund managers face-to-face to gather detailed information regarding how they do business," said PERF Executive Director Terren Magid. "Based on this single trip, we were able to identify an attractive and prudent private equity opportunity available at a significant discount. The result is an \$8.8 million investment made in February that is now valued at approximately \$16 million."

This investment is part of an ongoing effort by PERF to implement an asset allocation designed to protect the portfolio from market downturns. The idea is that when one type of investment, such as public equity, is down, other types of investments may be flat or even up. While PERF cannot avoid the short term pain of today's markets, this approach to investing helps mitigate the long term impact to PERF of major swings in the market.

## Aggressive Cost Cutting

Clearly PERF is not immune from the dramatic market drops of the past months and has certainly felt the pain of deflating investment values. So, while PERF's investment team continues to look for opportunities to prudently diversify the PERF investment portfolio, the fund has been aggressively cutting costs.

Like public employees throughout Indiana, the PERF staff has gone without pay increases. In addition, many open positions have not been filled, and expenditures for everything from travel to pens and paper have been reduced.

"With these aggressive reductions in our operating costs, we project a savings of about 18 percent over the original budget for the fiscal year," said Magid. "At the same time, we have not compromised on those things that are most important to the long term security of the fund, including closely monitoring our investment managers and looking for top-tier investment opportunities. We believe this level of due diligence continues to protect us from unscrupulous investment managers such as Bernie Madoff."

## An Eye to the Future

PERF's asset allocation was intentionally designed to weather market challenges and economic recessions. A strong asset allocation focused on diversification, combined with a prudent 30-plus-year investment horizon, means the fund is being managed to ensure members' future benefits are not at risk now or in the future.

In addition to the recessionary opportunities such as the recent Asian private equity investment, PERF has an eye toward a post-recession future. When market stability and growth return, PERF is well positioned to take prudent advantage of improved conditions for the benefit of our members and employers.

In the meantime, the fund will continue aggressive cost cutting and close scrutiny of current investment managers while prudently identifying investment opportunities in the U.S. and around the globe.

# *Now we have Tom Brokaw to worry about?*

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April 20, 2009 Op-Ed Contributor N Y Times

## Small-Town Big Spending

By TOM BROKAW

DURING these uncertain times we've yet to hear a phrase with the resonance of Franklin Roosevelt's "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," but there are a couple of minor-chord expressions that should have staying power.

One is the observation of Rahm Emanuel, the White House chief of staff, that "you never want a serious crisis to go to waste." Another comes from my boss, Jeff Immelt, the chief executive of General Electric, who has warned, "This is not a cycle; it's a reset."

Taken together, these remarks challenge us to go beyond trying to quickly fix the immediate problems of toxic mortgages, risky banks, a struggling American car industry and escalating health care costs. If the American people are tuned into the need to change the irresponsible, inefficient practices and systems that created those problems, why not enlist them to take the next step and radically change the antiquated public structures that exist beyond the Beltway?

Here are a few examples. It's estimated that New York State has about 10,500 local government entities, from townships to counties to special districts. A year ago a bipartisan state commission said that New Yorkers could save more than a billion dollars a year by consolidating and sharing local government responsibilities like public security, health, roads and education.

One commission member, a county executive, said, "Our system of local government has barely evolved over the past one hundred years and we are still governed by these same archaic institutions formed before the invention of the light bulb, telephone, automobile and computer."

In accepting the commission's recommendations, Gov. David Paterson promised to work diligently to put the changes into effect. When his budget was presented this spring it included several of the proposed changes, but it immediately met stiff resistance even from members of his own party who were determined to protect their parochial interests. It appears that few of the original recommendations will survive.

In my native Great Plains, North and South Dakota have a combined population of just under 1.5 million people, and in each state the rural areas are being depopulated at a rapid rate. Yet between them the two Dakotas support 17 colleges and universities. They are a carry-over from the early 20th century when travel was more difficult and farm families wanted their children close by during harvest season.

I know this is heresy, but couldn't the two states get a bigger bang for their higher education buck if they consolidated their smaller institutions into, say, the Dakota Territory College System, with satellite campuses but a common administration and shared standards?

Iowa, next door, is having its own struggles with maintaining population, especially among the young. As the Hawkeye State's taxpayers grow older and less financially productive, the cost of government services becomes more expensive.

Yet Iowa proudly maintains its grid of 99 counties, each with its own distinctive courthouse, many on the National Register of Historic Places — and some as little as 40 miles away from one another. Each one houses a full complement of clerks, auditors, sheriff's deputies, jailers and commissioners. Is there any reason beyond local pride to maintain such duplication given the economic and population pressures of our time?

This is not a problem unique to the states I have cited. Every state and every region in the country is stuck with some form of anachronistic and expensive local government structure that dates to horse-drawn wagons, family farms and small-town convenience.

If this is a reset, it's time to reorganize our state and local government structures for today's realities rather than cling to the sensibilities of the 20th century.

If we demand this from General Motors, we should ask no less of ourselves.

Tom Brokaw, a special correspondent for NBC News, is the author, most recently, of "Boom! Talking About the '60s."

# Protecting Township Government

The reversal of the recent proposal to eliminate township government in Indiana reinforces the fact that Indiana townships are vital! Township officials relate to their citizens and affirm that “knowing your neighbor counts!”

Indiana has over 1000 townships ranging in population from 51 to 165,000 citizens. While township sizes may be different, all township officials make many decisions, some of which can result in legal action.

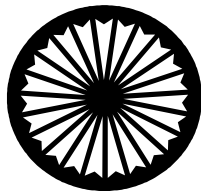
Consider some examples of when townships and the local citizen might be in conflict: A citizen might trip and fall at a township office, a pedestrian could be hit by a rock thrown from a mower at a township cemetery or park, or someone could allege illegal discrimination in the delivery of welfare services. Even small townships are not immune from legal suit!

Many township officials help to protect themselves and their citizens with insurance - others may operate without coverage, perhaps not realizing the risks they face or perhaps they are under the impression that the township is covered by the county. Townships are separate governing entities and are not typically protected by a county.

*Township officials are held to the same legal standards of conduct of other public officials. Seemingly small mistakes can lead to lawsuits, or, you can be sued even if you did nothing wrong at all.* Defense of a lawsuit can cost many thousands of dollars and if the courts find negligence or fault, the costs can be much greater. An annual insurance premium is usually quite modest in comparison to the cost of uninsured risk.

Trustees play a vital role in Indiana government. So while you celebrate the triumph of township government, be sure you have the proper insurance in place so that you can continue to do your job of relating to and serving the citizens of your township.

This article was provided courtesy of Bliss McKnight, Inc.



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

This site is dedicated to preserving local  
government in Indiana.

# *AMERICA'S TOWN MEETING*

## 2009 LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE



### **SAVE THE DATE**

September 8 - 11, 2009

Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill  
Washington, DC



*Join town and township officials from across  
the country at this once-a-year opportunity to  
advance small community interests*

#### **National Association of Towns and Townships**

1130 Connecticut Avenue, NW ✕ Suite 300 ✕ Washington, DC 20036  
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CORRECT  
email address?**

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)

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***GRASSROOTS***

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**Editorial Board**

*Executive Committee Members*

This is the revised form for use by townships within MODERNIZED counties.



TOWNSHIP TRUSTEE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

State Form 53839 (R / 3-09) / DFR 2147

Instruction for Township Trustee: Please complete Section A and Section B for each client/case for which information is being requested. Completed forms should be sent by e-mail to trustee\_help@ifcem.com. When it is not possible to e-mail the completed form, please fax to 1-219-769-1143; however for automated tracking of your request we encourage the use of the e-mail address listed whenever possible. Note: Please do not mail this form to the FSSA Document Center.

SECTION A (Completed by Township Trustee)
Township Trustee Address:
City: Zip:
County:
Requestor Name:
Trustee Phone Number:
Trustee Fax Number:
Date of Request:
E-mail to: trustee\_help@ifcem.com
or Fax to:
FSSA Township Trustee Inquiry Requests
1-219-769-1143
[The e-mail address and fax number are only for Township Trustee requests. No other documents are to be faxed to this number.]

SECTION B (Completed by Township Trustee)
Client/Case Information
Case Number: (for Food Stamp and/or TANF case)
Client First Name:
Client Last Name:
SSN:
Date of Birth:
Additional Information Needed:\*

\* If you are requesting information that is not listed in Section C, please FAX with this request page 9 of the client's Application for Township Assistance ("Consent to the Disclosure of Information") with the client's signature.

SECTION C (Completed by FSSA Service Center. Latest status for Food Stamps and/or TANF, if any)
Pending Application
Application Denied
Currently Receiving Benefit Amount Begin Date of Eligibility
Benefits Closed
No Food Stamp or TANF record found

## 19 GRASSROOTS

### Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP)

The Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Program (HPRP) is created by funds from Title XII of the American Recovery and Rehabilitation Act of 2009 (ARRA) to allow expanded prevention and/or rapid rehousing for persons with moderate barriers to stable permanent housing. It is available to entitlement cities and the balance of state with a total allocation of approximately \$28 million for Indiana. IHADA is working with Indiana Continuum of Care regions to develop "single point of access" organizations to coordinate and administer these funds. The program begins in September 2009 and extends for three years. Please visit this site regularly to view updates from the program, this will include the RFP for the "single point of access" organizations.

In order to receive HPRP funds, each eligible grantee must prepare and submit a substantial amendment to its Consolidated Plan. The substantial amendment and other required documents must be received by HUD within 60 days of the publication of the notice of March 19, 2009. In preparing the substantial amendment, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority must follow its Citizen Participation Plan in accordance with 24 CFR Part 91, except that the time period for citizens to comment on the substantial amendment is reduced to 12 days.

### Continuum of Care

Since 1994, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has been encouraging communities to address the problems of housing and homelessness in a coordinated, comprehensive, and strategic fashion. This concept is designed to help communities develop the capacity to envision, organize, and plan comprehensive and long-term solutions to addressing the problem of homelessness in their community.

The Continuum of Care is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness.

The components of a CoC system is outreach, intake, and assessment to identify an individual's or family's service and housing needs, and to link them to appropriate housing and/or service resources like: Emergency shelter and safe, decent alternatives to the streets, Transitional housing with supportive services and then permanent housing and permanent supportive housing.

### Trustees:

If you are interested in accessing these funds, please contact your local Chairperson for your CoC. Attend their meetings so that you can get involved in the process!

<http://www.in.gov/ihcda/3120.htm#CoC>

Region	Chairperson	Agency	City	Phone	Email
1A	Sharon Liggins	The Continuum of Care Network of NWI, Inc.	Gary	(219) 613-7571	sharonliggins@aol.com
1	Caroline Shook	Housing Opportunities	Valparaiso	(219) 548-2800	<a href="mailto:shook@housing-opportunities.com">shook@housing-opportunities.com</a>
2	Crystal Welsh	City of Elkhart	Elkhart	(574) 294-5471	<a href="mailto:crystal.welsh@coei.org">crystal.welsh@coei.org</a>
3	Mary Ethheart	Hope House	Fort Wayne	(260) 424-3711	<a href="mailto:hope.house@verizon.net">hope.house@verizon.net</a>
4	Jennifer Layton	Lafayette Transitional Housing	Lafayette	(765) 423-4880	JLayton@lthc.net
5	Pam Isaac	Family Service Association	Kokomo	(765) 868-3154	pam@fsahc.org
5	Jerry Meiring	City of Kokomo		(765) 456-7393	<a href="mailto:jmeiring@cityofkokomo.org">jmeiring@cityofkokomo.org</a>
6	Susie Kemp	BRIDGES Community Services	Muncie	(765) 282-3948	<a href="mailto:louiesk@yahoo.com">louiesk@yahoo.com</a>
7	Myra Wilkey	Mental Health Association of Vigo County	Terre Haute	(812) 232-5681	mwilkey@mhavc.org
8	Melissa Stayton	Center for Mental Health	Anderson	(765) 649-8161	<a href="mailto:mstayton@cfmh.org">mstayton@cfmh.org</a>
9	Tony Foster	City of Richmond	Richmond	(765) 983-7211	<a href="mailto:tfoster@ci.richmond.in.us">tfoster@ci.richmond.in.us</a>
10	Jill Stowers	Bloomington Hospital/Positive Link	Bloomington	(812) 353-3250	JStowers@bloomingtonhospital.org
10	Warren Wade	Stepping Stones, Inc.		(812) 339-9771	<a href="mailto:wwade@steppingstones-inc.org">wwade@steppingstones-inc.org</a>
11	Peggy Idlewine	Human Services	Columbus	(812) 372-8407	midlewine@hsi-indiana.com
12	Luzada Hayes	Aurora, Inc.	Evansville	(812) 428-3246	luzhayes@auroraevansville.org
12	Gayl Killough	Dprt of Metropolitan Development	Evansville		<a href="mailto:gkillough@evansvillegov.org">gkillough@evansvillegov.org</a>
13	Paula Craig	Blue River Services	Corydon	(812) 738-8016	<a href="mailto:brhoudir@brsinc.org">brhoudir@brsinc.org</a>
13	Paul Murphy	Community Mental Health Center	Batesville	(812) 934-5162	<a href="mailto:cssadir@cmhcinc.org">cssadir@cmhcinc.org</a>

# ***2009 ITA Educational Conference***

## ***\* September 21-23, 2009***

***\* Indianapolis Sheraton***

*Monday, September 21*

General Session & Breakouts

*Tuesday, September 22*

Breakout Seminars

*Wednesday, September 23*

State Board of Accounts; trade show; awards banquet

**\* Note the change of dates and location!** The Sheraton is located on the north side of Indianapolis near 86th & Keystone. The ITA has received many requests to move the conference from downtown for a change of pace. The Sheraton is located at Keystone at the Crossing which has many amenities along with free parking.



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