



Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform

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Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform report released

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Streamlining Local Government: We've got to stop governing like this
includes 27 common-sense recommendations for improved efficiency and effectiveness

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Recommended changes could result in up to 5,843 fewer elected officials,
1,155 fewer units of government

INDIANAPOLIS—Former Governor Joe Kernan and Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Randall Shepard, co-chairs of the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform, today released the Commission's report, *Streamlining Local Government: We've got to stop governing like this*.

The report includes 27 recommendations for making Indiana's local government more efficient, effective, understandable and accountable. It calls for changes in counties, cities, townships, libraries, schools and more.

If enacted, the recommendations would reduce the number of local government units from 3,086 to 1,931—a 37 percent cut, and the number of elected officials from 11,012 to as few as 5,171—a reduction of more than half.

Governor Mitch Daniels formed the bipartisan commission in July 2007, and asked its members to “recommend ways to restructure local government to increase efficiency and reduce the financial burden on Indiana taxpayers.”

In addition to Kernan and Shepard, Commission members are former Secretary of State Sue Anne Gilroy, former State Senator Louis Mahern, retired Lincoln National Corp. Chairman and CEO Ian Rolland, Indiana Purdue Fort Wayne faculty member John Stafford, and former Indiana University President Adam Herbert.

The commission's work was funded by Indiana University and staffed by IU's Center for Urban Policy and the Environment.

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The report's release coincides with Statehood Day, which commemorates the date in 1816 that Indiana became the 19th state to join the Union.

The announcement also fulfills a promise made by Governor Mitch Daniels when he formed the Commission in July: to have a report in time for the 2008 General Assembly to consider the Commission's recommendations.

"Six months ago, Governor Daniels asked our bipartisan group of volunteer citizens to figure out how to move Indiana's local government system out of the 1850s and into the 21st century," said Shepard. "After reviewing reams of research and data, and spending hours in discussion and debate, we agreed unanimously on 27 recommendations that we believe will allow Hoosiers to receive better local services at a lower cost."

"We have lots of good people serving in local government in Indiana, but their ability to deliver great public service is limited by an antiquated system," said Kernan. "Over the last few months, Hoosiers have told us over and over again—through the Commission's Web site, in public meetings, and in personal conversations—that they want local government that's more efficient and accountable."

Among the commission's recommendations:

- County governments should be led by a single, elected county executive and a stronger county council, to which professionally qualified administrators should report and be accountable.
- The services performed by township personnel should be transferred to the county governments.
- All local public safety services should be coordinated countywide, and regionally where appropriate. Emergency dispatch must be centralized, at least countywide, using the compatible 800 MHz system.
- Only elected officials should have the power to levy taxes.
- Indiana's school districts should be large enough to gather sufficient resources to educate our children for 21st-century life.
- All spending, including school spending, should be subject to more rigorous examination by elected officials.

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- A statewide office should be designated to provide technical assistance to help local governments make recommended changes.

The co-chairs noted that Indiana’s current system of local government offers a complex and redundant system that results in inconsistent and inefficient service. Citizens in some areas receive services without paying for them, while citizens in other areas pay for services they don’t receive.

“We can address these inequities by having fewer units of government, eliminating redundancy and more clearly defining responsibilities,” said Shepard. “One such inequity is libraries. Nearly 400,000 people in 38 counties do not have access to library services in the communities where they live. To address that, we’re recommending that libraries be consolidated into countywide library districts.”

The complete report is available at the Commission’s public information Web site: <http://indianalocalgovreform.iu.edu/>.

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