



**Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform
Summary of South Bend Public Forum: October 11, 2007**

The compiled responses below were provided to the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform by approximately 82 citizens at the public forum held in South Bend at the City-County Building on October 11, 2007. Comments were recorded by Indiana University South Bend faculty and students in attendance. Written comments submitted at the event have been recorded with other individual submissions taken by web, e-mail, and regular mail.

- Local flexibility needed for revenue streams. Feels it's more efficient for government to be able to appoint their own official heads.
- Suggestions that cities and counties combine such as Indianapolis combining with Marion County – sharing services such as roads, police, fire, etc.
- Too many township assessors (ex. Elkhart County) - each has his own office, staff, etc. There are 16 in Elkhart, should stick with just one county assessor.
- Why can't counties combine for jails? Have a regional correctional facility.
- Federal tax rate is 35%. Most corporations do not pay taxes. Average rate paid by corporations is 5%. GE does not pay taxes. Total federal tax paid by corporations is 7%. 50% of corporations in Indiana pay 0%. Should be alternative minimum tax for corporations, earmark revenue for local governments.
- Tax fees should be spent on non-elected (appointed) boards. Caution against structuring something across the state "on average." Look at specific entities to see what change will do.
- Encourage committee to not turn its back on rural residents – more libraries are needed.
- Whatever taxes are eliminated, beware of what is left. A lot of departments overlap, doing the same jobs. Expenses are padded. Watch what politicians are spending.
- Streamline government, cut the waste
- Libraries receive less than 4% of tax dollars. Indiana libraries rank 2nd overall in US for service.
- Caution that when something is done in government, it's hard to un-do. Cities are deteriorating from the inside out due to property taxes. Need to trim extra people in government. Red flags raised for having mayor have appointed officials rather than elected – people would have no say in their local government.
- Township government is providing services to people for less than other local governments.
- Local government needs to control spending – keep in line with inflation.
- City-wide public services should be consolidated, i.e., one hazmat team, 1 human resources department for all levels of govt., 1 insurance department, etc. Consolidate elections, eliminate municipal elections.
- Look at government reform – more efficient government to service the people of Indiana. Some states have police commissioners elected by the people. Need to have option to recall officials not doing their jobs. Some jobs need to be combined, others separated to make them more accountable to people.
- We need local fiscal flexibility.
- Concerned about streamlining municipal government, causing more taxes to the townships.



- Judiciary should be moved from local level to state level. Child welfare funding needs to be taken from somewhere other than taxes.
- Most reasons government was structured the way it is don't exist anymore.
- Townships are run for a huge amount less than municipal governments. Use of volunteers for many services in townships saves a great amount of money.
- Townships meetings are more productive. People in layers of government need to cut back on spending. Several counties can combine for services, i.e., township fire depts. The toll road should be taxed for services they are receiving. Property taxes should be based on sale value of homes.
- There is duplication of services between city and county governments.
- Concerns that the commission will cause a closing of some libraries and reduction of services. Elected library boards would bring in too many politics and personal agendas.
- There is a need for creative funding for parks and recreation. Merging cities and counties requires a lot of discussion.
- There is nothing like Uni-Gov in Elkhart County. They don't want libraries consolidated.
- The state needs to put caps on levies to help with taxes. Reminder that "one size won't fit all." Trustees are paid a minimal wage for what they do for local government.
- Libraries should be consolidated. Share libraries resources – example: PHM libraries. Small libraries cannot provide the level of service that large ones can. Consolidate along county lines. Many townships now don't have a library. Libraries should be funded by income tax – not property tax.
- We should consolidate like Indianapolis – Uni-gov – that would be the way to go locally. Any county with large populations should consolidate to save money.
- Brought up a newspaper article from the South Bend Tribune from 12/06 about South Bend/Mishawaka government changes – Hometown Matters. Wants encouragement to property owners for improving their property/not penalized for improvements in increased taxes.
- Food and beverage taxes to get \$ from non-residents to support services they use.
- Have either a county-wide tax rate or have those who use city services pay taxes. County residents pay lower taxes but use city benefits and services.