



**Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform  
Summary of Franklin Public Forum: October 17, 2007**

The compiled responses below were provided to the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform by approximately 100 citizens at the public forum held in Franklin at the Franklin College on October 17, 2007. Comments were recorded by a member of each table (small group). In cases when similar responses were recorded by multiple tables, these responses are marked with the number of tables providing the response. Written comments submitted at the event have been recorded with other individual submissions taken by web, e-mail, and regular mail.

**Please talk briefly about the local governments and local government services or functions you have accessed or interacted with over the last year.**

- Police/sheriff (10 tables)
- Schools (8 tables)
- Infrastructure (8 tables)
- Libraries (6 tables)
- Sewer & water (5 tables)
- Sanitation department (5 tables)
- Fire (5 tables)
- Parks and recreation (4 tables)
- Planning and zoning (4 tables)
- Township trustees (4 tables)
- Assessor (3 tables)
- Court systems (2 tables)
- Social service agencies (2 tables)
- Tax collection (2 tables)
- Snow removal (2 tables)
- BMV (2 tables)
- Health department (2 tables)
- Town council (2 tables)
- County council (2 tables)
- Utilities (2 tables)
- Emergency services
- Mayor's office
- Election board
- Youth agencies
- Commissioner
- Hospital
- Recorder
- Clerk
- Treasurer
- Auditor



**What local government services are most critical to the success of your community and your family? To maintaining a healthy local economy and good quality of life?**

- Schools (8 tables)
- Infrastructure (6 tables)
- Police (6 tables)
- Fire (6 tables)
- Planning & zoning (3 tables)
- Public safety (4 tables)
- Social services (2 tables)
- Library (2 tables)
- Sanitation department (2 tables)
- Council members
- Hospitals
- Mayor
- Senior services
- Parks

**What can be done to modernize and streamline local governments and the services they provide?**

- Eliminate positions within the county (e.g. assessor, trustees/board) (4 tables)
- Eliminate overlap of services between state and local governments (e.g. welfare, prosecution) (4 tables)
- Technology should drive efficiencies (e.g. teleconferencing) (4 tables)
- State should control school funding (i.e. eliminate school boards) (4 tables)
- Too many layers of government in this state (counties, townships, etc.) (3 tables)
- Consolidate school corporations (3 tables)
- Consolidate sheriff and police departments (2 tables)
- Reduce the number of assessors (2 tables)
- More interaction and cooperation among entities (2 tables)
- Create incentives and motivations for cooperation; current structure allows us to operate selfishly (2 tables)
- Government needs to operate on a fixed income (2 tables)
- One size does not fit all (2 tables)
- Input for schools and libraries should stay local (2 tables)
- Government is into too many things; not here to solve everyone's problems (2 tables)
- Eliminate elected officials for ministerial duties (e.g. coroner, auditor, recorders)
- Eliminate unfunded mandates to local government
- Consolidate township governments
- Consolidate counties (e.g. combine Johnson and Morgan Counties)
- Consolidate auditor and treasurer functions
- Consolidate fire departments
- Small city services with county services
- Centralization of services should be considered before consolidation
- Reduce county commissioners to one per county
- Move assessor records to the state level; privatization would ease the assessment problem
- Tax the people spending the money (schools)
- Force regional cooperation across all topics discussed here



- Run government like a business; do an analysis of duplicating efforts within levels of government
- Look at other states and their efficiencies and copy
- Revise local government structure
- Government should only employ as many people as absolutely necessary
- Utilize volunteers to help clean streets and parks
- Standardized design of schools. Architects (building state buildings) know how to work the system. Some architects should be used, to compare.
- Libraries should be shared between schools
- Library boards should be elected
- Make each government unit responsible to the local needs
- Government needs accountability, transparency and oversight
- Stop state micromanaging of local government
- Communities/ schools can share sports facilities
- Pool payroll, insurance and purchasing across all districts statewide
- Keep township government or the rural areas will be underserved
- Cemetery maintenance should be at the county level
- Re-elect a whole new group of officials
- Improve local planning responsibilities
- Make Internet access more available
- Trim the fat at the top and give to trustee level
- Planning commissions are a mess
- This commission has to have someone from on high to change political system to get rid of “turfism” in order to do what’s right and needs to be done
- Question trustee position
- Can we privatize infrastructure work?
- Government shouldn’t be in the competitive industry. Stick to the basics (police, fire, etc.)
- Privatization may sacrifice some control
- Just because you’ve consolidated doesn’t mean they shouldn’t be represented
- Indiana remaining state to have county councils
- Consolidation will never happen, too much power within those positions
- If services between the city and counties are consolidated, we should use caution and ensure services are not hindered or lost in the streamlining
- Government officials should not be allowed to vote to give themselves a raise.
- Corporate limits of towns should be one school district, not divided by townships.
- There are problems with the prevailing wage (i.e. Competitive bidding is restricted as a result since some agencies aren’t aware that they can hire ‘non-union’ contractors.
- Institute user fees for less utilized local services—but do not price-out the low income households)
- Create a uniform system statewide for property tax and local government systems.
- Flat taxes
- Institute a luxury tax
- Pay for schools with sales tax only
- Sales tax for Internet sales
- Other ways to raise revenue should be explored in order to replace property tax
- Voters need to be able to make more decisions. We pay them, so we should tell them what to do



- We want Proposition 13 (i.e. institute the same property tax reform as in California)
- Tax housing purchases
- Incremental raises in sales tax to replace property taxes
- Homestead credit should be passed on to landlords
- Cap taxation by age groups
- Local governments are not getting enough gas tax money back from the state to improve the roads
- Property assessment values okay. Tax rates are incorrect
- Indiana is not a referendum state

**What do you think has the biggest impact — negative or positive — on the ability of local governments to deliver services efficiently and effectively?**

Positive

- Inter-local/regional agreements; service collaboration (4 tables)
- Keeping local government local (2 tables)
- Keep control of expenses
- Work release labor
- All properties on GIS system
- Citizen's academy
- These local forums for public input
- Computer access is more widely available
- Citizens care about government

Negative

- Public apathy; not enough people care about government until a time of crisis (e.g. property taxes) (5 tables)
- Change in the public attitudes stretches public service delivery
- Unfunded mandates (5 tables)
- State control; state has too strong of a hold on local government activities and funding (5 tables)
- Lack of training and education for local government officials (3 tables)
- People do not know the responsibilities of each position in government; post job descriptions for everyone (2 tables)
- Lack of government accountability; too many holes and officials push responsibility on others (e.g. School Superintendent); The system is set up for corrupt behavior (2 tables)
- Lack of effective communication (2 tables)
- Part-time local leaders (2 tables)
- Resources need to be effective and used efficiently (2 tables)
- Maximum levy (2 tables)
- No state incentives for counties to save money for emergencies (2 tables)
- No incentives for governments to advance technology and change
- Non-profit organizations do not pay for services
- Poor influence of federal and state bureaucracy on local government
- Budget restraints
- School boards are too removed from local government
- Tax abatements are too liberal
- Indiana's cultural norm keeps us from doing things quickly
- Not enough local rule
- Lack of regional leadership



- Lack of cooperation between coordinating and overlapping jurisdictions
- Too many layers in local government
- Blame shifting

**Considering the discussion this evening, what are your top three recommendations for reforming the structure and/or function of local government?**

- Accountability and transparency (4 tables)
- Consolidate within township government (3 tables)
- Control/ cut government spending (3 tables)
- Maintaining local control (3 tables)
- User fees should be mandatory for not-for-profits (3 tables)
- Educate citizens across state on how our tax system works (3 tables)
- Change the 5% cap on tax increases that counties take every year (3 tables)
- Consolidate government layers (2 tables)
- Consolidate small population counties (2 tables)
- Stop tax abatements (2 tables)
- Consolidate school districts (3 tables)
- Consolidate school administration (2 tables)
- Eliminate trustees/township assessors (2 tables)
- Eliminate unfunded state mandates (2 tables)
- Restructure law enforcement (2 tables)
- Analyze and evaluate who is doing what in government entities and where collaboration and consolidation can take place (2 tables)
- Uniform systems for computerization of local government to maximize efficiency and consistency (2 tables)
- Consolidate sheriffs' departments and jails
- Consolidate repeat public services
- Consolidate local government positions
- Consolidate city and county government
- Do consolidation slowly, incrementally
- Consolidate the county auditor and treasurer's offices
- Eliminate government officials job perks (e.g. take home police cars)
- Privatize (i.e. hire personnel based on qualifications, not political personality)
- Improve auditing (do not only look for fraud and theft)
- Create an annual program/accountability report
- Offer incentives for local governments to reduce costs without penalties
- Encourage the county to figure out how to operate efficiently
- One size does not fit all
- Create county-wide tax boards to help prioritize the needs of county departments
- Elected officials should be qualified before running for an office
- Tie timelines to council agendas
- Deliver services equally
- Improve communication between government entities
- Remove high paid jobs and bring them to a local level.
- Give money back to local businesses instead of large stores
- Provide more Internet access to rural area
- School funding policies must be analyzed
- Lower taxes



- Bring back the inventory tax
- Fund schools through state sales and income taxes

**Are there any other important issues that we have not discussed yet?**

- Where does legalized gambling money go? When it was illegal, and made legal, it was supposed to relieve some tax
- Whether money is spent by federal or local agencies, it's coming from our pocket
- Concerns that even local government commission has already made up its mind and will not consider the notes from the roundtable discussions
- \$14 million in alcohol tax and \$232 million in cigarette tax—why the discrepancy?
- Land that was zoned as agriculture and changed to residential should be returned to agriculture
- Daylight Savings Time: go back to original; stay on time year around; many say it's bad for business and others aren't on time during fall and spring