



**Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform
Summary of Public Input: October 1 – October 15, 2007**

The excerpted statements below summarize public comments received by the Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform through the commission's web site, e-mail address, or by mail between October 1, 2007 and October 15, 2007. Comments specifically about property taxes have been forwarded to the Commission on State Tax and Financing Policy.

- I am writing to protest the consolidation of our Westchester public library with the Porter county library system. I am against consolidation as I fear we will lose our unique libraries. Please do not "fix" what is not broken. I have been to other libraries in Porter County and I believe our system is one-of-a-kind.
- Allow businesses to operate seven days a week. This would include auto lots and liquor stores. Cigarettes and liquor are being taxed now. Why not add a couple of days more to the buying window?
- Two years ago my monthly mortgage payment jumped \$500 a month to cover the increasing property tax escrow. Best wishes in your work as you address your charge and consider various relief options.
- Cut the budget of some of the state agencies that are not critical to services. Do not cut local services. Do not consolidate services. I think it is better to allow schools to provide functions on a local level than to fill our jails with teens who are lost. Keep the local schools. Quit giving tax abatements so freely. Bring back the inventory tax.
- Is my town going to be using the natural gas that comes from the dump as energy? If parents want to homeschool their kids, give them a tax break/refund so they can use that money to buy materials to teach their children. Don't give corporations a free ride or subsidies. Make them pay their fair share. Make Indiana gas prices lower so that people from Illinois will come over here to spend their money. With the close of our "fun center" create something that will bring people from nearby areas into our county. The State of Florida has no state taxes because so many visitors come there to spend their money.
- I am angry about the large retirement budgets for retired school teachers, fire fighters, and police officers that my property taxes support.
- Where the township is predominately incorporated into towns and cities, there is no need for a township and it should be eliminated. Take a good look at this issue. It appears to me to be just another layer of government and adds additional expenses and higher taxes with little or not benefit to the taxpayers.
- There are many services that would be sorely missed by the patrons of my library. It gives them a quality of life that they would not be able to have otherwise. I urge you to think long and hard about consolidation and to consider more than just the dollar and cents of this issue.
- We should keep the township trustee but take the assessor's job and give it to someone who has trained for it. Don't take away our library system. Having the county take it over would change the wonderful interaction among the residents.
- It is time to decrease the size of the government. Consolidate and decrease. However, the corrupt county must be cleaned up.



- The first, and most basic reform, should be the elimination of the property tax. Replace the lost revenue by increasing the income tax. Keep all the sources of revenue simple. Dump the CAGIT (County Adjusted Gross Income Tax) and EDIT (Economic Development Income Tax). Get all taxes out where we can see them in one number, with high visibility and easy to understand. Make it hard to raise the tax rate. Let the government income go up as incomes rise. If incomes do not rise, who needs more government anyway? Eliminate townships and reduce the number of counties by one fourth or one third. Leave the Indy ring of counties alone because you need their votes to get a program passed. My county was originally cut up to create a lot of other counties, which were sized to put the residents within a day's horseback ride of the county seat. We don't ride everywhere on horseback any more and we need to update our governmental organization to reflect current technologies.
- I am concerned about the possibility of Westchester public library being consolidated with Porter County library. Our library is a valuable asset in our community. I respectfully urge you to allow us to keep it.
- The way I see it, you have two choices, but they are not mutually exclusive. Reduce government spending and increase revenues by increasing the state sales tax, gas tax, and cigarette tax.
- As a former auditor of my county I almost wrote a book on the waste in county government. After eight years as an auditor, I felt that one-third of county employees could be eliminated. Many of the local elected officials were not qualified for their positions. Auditors should be appointed without political ramifications. The position should have to meet certain professional standards and education. Local government should be run as a business. I went back 148 years and corrected county records that were wrong or simply had not been completed.
- I find it disturbing that consolidation is the first thought when looking at cost cutting. Consolidation of schools has been done so well that schools are now trying to break themselves into smaller units to get to know the students and serve them better. Now we are talking about consolidation of libraries. The people of Indiana have valued their public libraries. By creating one library board each community loses representation on the library board. This would not be a reasonable or acceptable change.
- Our library is the heart of our community. After a two year study our library districts addressed the issue of consolidation and came to the conclusion that consolidation would not be in the best interest of the public they serve. With consolidation our library would become a branch library and most likely only have one representative on a board largely comprised of members of larger populated areas. As a small library, how much of our tax dollars would be directed to their origin? Of our tax dollars, only 3.1% goes to libraries. The bottom line is that there is no promise that consolidation will save the taxpayer money. Many times consolidation small libraries are closed that are important to their communities. Putting libraries under one control would severely dampen what the library means to communities, sort of dehumanizing the libraries into a "Wal-Mart" blend. Consolidation might mean some of our seasoned personnel would be dismissed. All of the processing and cataloging would be done centrally. Would our patrons, especially the children, have to rely on a larger library busy with patrons from their own area to answer their questions? Consolidation would require new buildings the debt for which would be shouldered in part by property taxpayers. A better alternative is collaboration with other libraries.



- Library consolidation has only disadvantages, such as a cut in service, programs, and personnel. Our south county taxes would go to the county system, perhaps "power grabbing", with limited presentation from our community, and only a small portion going to our hometown public library. I am totally against the consolidation of the county libraries and have yet to talk to anyone in the area who is for it. Our hometown library is well-organized and is professionally operated by dedicated personnel, and is one of my favorite places.
- I do not like the idea of consolidating town and county departments to cut taxes. We local citizens have more control over our lives with departments being local. Costs would be saved if an employment agency reviewed resumes and applications. Employees are too often hired because they are friends of the department head. Some departments rush to spend the balances of their appropriations at the end of the fiscal year. The last month would be a good time for a watchdog to check on the purchases.
- I expect all wasteful duplication of government services be eliminated. The tax burden continues to grow and outpaces our personal income. Please pay attention to services provided to non-citizens. Hospitals and schools are expected to provide them services at the expense of taxpayers. Our country will be lost to illegal aliens if politicians remain silent because they are afraid of being branded racists!
- Replace property tax with sales or income tax or at least give an exemption for people who have owned the same piece of property for 25 years. This would allow many elderly people to live without fear of losing their home to a tax sale. The problem I see with raising the sales tax much more than neighboring states, is that some people would go to other states to purchase big ticket items. That is why I believe that a national sales tax needs to be put in place.
- I would hate to lose my library to consolidation. We do not want to be a "cookie-cutter" library, nor do we want our library to be eliminated. Why don't you check the other towns in our county which have the lowest populations but the highest tax rates for libraries and adjust accordingly?
- Please look for other ways to save tax dollars. We love our libraries and all the services provided to our communities. Our community wants to keep our libraries. When the communities are measured a strong library allow the community to rank higher within all quality of life scales.
- I recommend caution with regard to library consolidation because the impact of the small independently managed libraries in rural areas is unbelievably important. In many cases, the efforts of rural area local libraries (and librarians) were the sole source of interest in reading, knowing...caring about the wider world. It is the librarians' intimate knowledge of the community members, and their personalized approach that makes the outreach effective. I generally support your efforts (automating license branches, professionalizing and rationalizing tax assessors) but let libraries be the exception...they should be exceptional!
- Please keep our libraries open as they provide mothers a great area for reading to children and early literacy programs. Maybe local service clubs could provide funds to assist keeping these two literacy facilities open. Reading opens the mind and strengthens the people of the community. The service at our libraries is outstanding. The state has enough to do, and needs to allow the community to operate their libraries.
- I really do not think it is a good idea to consolidate our schools and libraries. I also would like to see some cutbacks. I would also like to see local government retain their current power, not the state. I think that tax abatements are handed out way to easily, mainly to confined animal feeding operations. One of the best things this state could do is to bring back the inventory tax.



- We are opposed to the consolidation of community libraries. Our library provides excellent opportunities for the community. The summer activities are abundant for children of all ages. We believe the service to the community the library currently offers will not (can not) remain the same caliber if consolidation is to take place. Please don't allow consolidation to occur.
- I am voicing my opposition to eliminating or consolidating our library. This library is easy for the elderly to access due to the lack of stairs, etc. We all know that when the elderly keep reading, it keeps their minds young and helps ward off senility due to brain cell usage. The children of my town use this library for research, to do their homework after school, and to become lost in their love of books. Please do the right thing for the people of Indiana. Perhaps the government should start to look at other ways to cut back such as cutting politician's salaries, eliminating some of their pension benefits, quit financially supporting bogus groups or grants and put the money in educational endeavors, be it through libraries or schools.
- Our library is a wonderful asset to our small community. It is used by many low income families who could not afford fees to buy or use materials. I often refer students to our library for resources not available through our school library. I personally use the library regularly and would find it difficult to use the resources if it were not available locally. Please keep our town library where it is.
- I really do not want the consolidation of small and mid-size library systems. Surely there is some way to avoid the closing of small libraries. It is one thing that I actually don't mind my money that is coming out of my paycheck every week going to.
- Eliminating the township libraries would certainly harm our whole community. I think the idea of abolishing our local libraries (like happened with the BMV office) will do nothing but damage our communities.
- I have been serving on a township board for over 12 years; I'm in my fourth term. I cannot fathom an excuse for continuing with this antiquated layer of government. Most of what township trustees do is manage an office with a staff, hear cases needing assistance, meet occasionally with his/her board which does little else but approve the annual budget, and determine how much the township fire department needs to protect its constituents. Take the trustee, staff, and board pay out, the attorney's pay out, coordinate poor relief via county government with several one-room offices around the county; and get rid of the trustee, staff, board, attorney, and office space/maintenance. I'm not sure how to handle the fire departments, but you need to know that most are unable to recruit volunteers, so they are now paid firefighters. I'd like to see city/county fire departments take over entirely; these are the professional firefighters anyway. Obviously the county assessor can take over for the township assessors; hopefully more uniform assessments will result. I realize that when you were here in Evansville for the public hearing concerning local government reform that no one apparently came to diss the townships. I decided I'd rather write to you...
- When these jobs are ended...who will be farmed in to take these positions over...companies with no knowledge of our counties. Example: trending was done by a company with no knowledge of properties within our area. They created messes that we're still working to straightening out. When this change takes place who'll do these corrections that has the taxpayer in mind. Or are we just thinking about saving the almighty tax dollar so we can re-route that famous green to some other allocated area? We need local officials taking care of local problems, not China or any other entity. Maybe your job could be farmed out to the President. Wouldn't that make for a great state. Thank You.



- I do not agree with the Commission's recommendation to consolidate public libraries and to eliminate small and mid-sized library systems. Our local library tax rate is lower than any other system in our county. Our rates would very likely increase if the libraries were consolidated. We would lose our local representation on the library board and also local control of our programming which has been a factor in our system thriving. With the price of fuel as high as it is, it would be very inconvenient and costly for many of the library patrons who utilize the library and are able to walk or have a very short trip to a local library to suffer a consolidation and be required to travel further to a public library because their location was determined to be eliminated. Seniors and low income patrons would suffer tremendously. Please STOP the consolidation of the library system.
- It was recently brought to my attention that our local public library possibly could be closed. I would like to oppose the closing of the library since I use the library for research purposes. Also, my family uses the library especially in the summer when the school library is closed.
- Please keep our small town libraries open. The kids of our towns use them all the time and they have great programs for kids of all ages. The adult programs are very good too.
- Please do not eliminate small and mid-sized libraries. I love my library and so do my children.
- We have a very nice library which operates very efficiently and serves our community well with many educational programs for people of all ages, at minimal expense. Compare this with the County Library system, politicized as it is, which, if combined, would simply overwhelm our local library and make it as inefficient as so many of our other county agencies and offices, which are notoriously corrupt. All that is necessary to understand this is to read about the federal indictments of County governmental officials of all stripes, which are handed down almost every Monday by the U.S. Attorney. Please don't ruin one of the local institutions that works, and don't force any other municipal agencies to combine with their counterparts in the county or the large cities. It would be the death knell for those parts of the county which maintain respect for the rule of law and a decent regard for our fellow Man.
- Our library is a very important part of our community and we DO NOT want to consolidate with other libraries. We would lose a very valuable asset which means a great deal to us. Please do not recommend that this happens.
- I think we should close all libraries, open all borders, make teachers disciplinarians, and let sex, drugs and alcohol run rampant. Then we won't need you either!!!!!!!
- I am against the consolidation and possible elimination of the small and mid-size libraries throughout the state. Our town recently lost its BMV office. All residents must now travel to Portage and wait in long lines. I will not participate in the library system if I have to travel further to that as well. To consolidate and eliminate is an injustice, especially to seniors, low income families and children. Many times I have walked into our and have seen seniors enjoy sitting down with a book or having casual conversation over books. Children LOVE the kids section and the programs available to them. I'm sure you've heard this all before, but before you succumb to the all mighty dollar, think about the people who will be impacted. Think about the many people who won't support the library system any longer because they can't get to it or don't want to have to drive several miles. And then think about the additional burden on the roads, the pollution from the traffic, and the increasing disdain most individuals will have for our State government who, in this administration, cares nothing for the people who elected them.



Consolidation and elimination of the libraries in the State is a seriously wrong move. Don't screw with it!

- I am concerned about the possibility of closing local libraries and consolidating them in order to alleviate taxes. Although this might be an easy, quick fix, the long term effects clearly outweigh any possible tax relief. Promoting literacy and providing for the opportunities to access materials such as books, videos, and the Internet for a variety of reasons--both personal and educational--is an invaluable contribution to local communities. Our libraries are an integral part of each community and satisfy many needs. Closing these libraries or consolidating them will dramatically affect their effectiveness in providing a variety of resources and programs to the elderly, parents with young children, students, children from lower socio-economic backgrounds by creating more of a hardship as they may not have the necessary resources to travel further. When the cost of gasoline is added to the picture, the cost of closing any of these libraries outweighs any possible tax cuts for surrounding citizens. Clearly, Governor Daniels, promoting literacy and assisting the people of small communities throughout Indiana with the resources to build and develop those skills is more important than the dollars that may be saved by consolidation. The future welfare of society is dependent upon strong literacy skills. In business, money must be invested in order to receive a return. The more that is invested, the stronger the return. Continuing to invest in public libraries is an investment that will yield strong returns for our communities and the state of Indiana. Therefore, I urge you to consider other avenues for alleviating taxes.
- I would like to add my voice to the many others from whom I'm sure you have already heard, opposing any proposed consolidation of libraries. Our town and the surrounding areas are experiencing significant growth in population at this time, as people move east from the large city area to enjoy the lifestyle and advantages our area has to offer. When any area experiences growth, one of the first things that the area needs to consider is how to expand existing facilities to meet the needs of the population. Fire and police protection, public services, educational facilities - all need to be maintained and furthered so as to keep up with the growing needs of a growing population. Our town has already "looked to the future" in building a \$70M+ new high school, knowing that services of this kind are a "must" in the area. By the same token, I believe that we should not be looking at all for ways to cut budgetary corners by diminishing or consolidating educational facilities such as our libraries, but rather should be looking into ways to expand these facilities to meet what is already recognized as a growing need in our county. As a resident, an educator, and a voter, I urge you in the strongest possible terms to reconsider any thought of consolidating as important an educational and public service as is our public library.
- Please do not consolidate the Indiana libraries. Without them so much would be lost for the education of our children and adults. I have spent all my life spending wonderful hours [55 years] learning, exploring, reading, bringing my grandchildren to my local libraries, to pass on my enjoyment to them. So now all of them get their books at libraries. they use the computers play, go to story hours, etc. I have learned to use the world of the Internet as with other Seniors, the local library is the only way to get books and use all of their services close to home. Our librarians are excellent here. I could never get the help, service, friendliness and care so close to home. I can't put a price tag on how invaluable this is to our community. Please, please DO NOT consolidate our libraries and affect the future needs of all of Indiana's communities.
- Please don't close libraries.



- We love our local Crown Point Library. Please do not pass the consolidation of public libraries. The next nearest public library is miles away. We want the control of our library in local hands.
- As an avid user of our library, I certainly hope that the commission will NOT recommend the consolidation of public libraries. The current property tax debacle was not caused by spendthrift libraries - Our library's share of the tax dollar is 4.8 cents. It seems unlikely that this mess will be solved by shutting down libraries large or small. Libraries were always regarded as part of the educational system for both children and adults in small towns. They still are. It's where we go to get factual information, entertainment, new skills, and the use of equipment that many do not have (and that many can't afford.) It would seem obvious that fewer people will drive 20 miles are likely to check out fewer books than when they could walk or bicycle to their library.
- We want to keep our libraries open to serve our communities.
- I am angry that there are so many illegal aliens using our resources.
- Eliminate property taxes.
- We have boards that have taxing authority that are not elected by the people. They do not have insight into how many different items are tax dollar supported, have tunnel vision, and do not answer to anyone. These boards must be under direct control of elected officials that are aware of streets, emergency services, etc. so they can put the tax dollars where needed and serve the community best. A major problem with schools and municipal building projects is the soft costs. They run between 30 and 40% and that is robbery. Attorney fees for these projects is wrong. We could plan for a 3-room school or 100-room school. That would cut the costs of these projects. There are 14 trustees in our county and 10 of them are self-serving. If you consider the 1,008 in the state, it is a sizable sum of money altogether. The Assessor and Trustee positions are antiquated offices that should be looked at real hard. If I didn't run a large ambulance service and fire department there would be no need for this office. If these things are changed it could have a large effect on property taxes. Getting these changes through the legislature would be difficult because of self-interest. We all know the free lunches and golf outings provided by the lobbying groups have more influence than a taxpayer's complaint.
- Property taxes are out of control. The folks that are running the library either don't get it or are scrambling to save their jobs. The Porter library is unnecessary duplication. The Chesterton library wastes money buying movies (including R-rated ones) and providing high-speed internet access. Look at their trends in circulation. What is increasing? Movie circulation. They have contributed to putting some of the local video stores out of business. That is not an appropriate use of tax dollars, particularly when we are facing a property tax crisis.
- I am against the consolidation of libraries. Please do not consolidate our two library systems - or you do the public a disservice that is counterproductive.
- Our library is a very unique place. It has an essence of community. Please allow our library to remain our city's library.
- Please keep our library open. It is more than a library; it is a community cultural center.
- Please don't take away our libraries. I am so sad that our Governor has once again come up with such a horrible idea. Please don't let this happen in our community. Please don't make the library situation any harder than it already is.
- What a tragic state of affairs this is when our state government proposes the consolidation or elimination of mid-sized libraries in Indiana to save tax money. Our library is the HEART of our community. Please don't let anything happen to our brand new library.



- The residents of our township are not asking to be merged into a larger unit of government and preserve our public library district as it was formed. In good times and lean times we have supported our library with our time, talents and financial resources. We recognize that our township is unique and unlike the rest of our county. If the "bottom line" is good libraries, our residents will be better served by remaining an independent library district. If the "bottom line" is money, our township taxpayers continue to be willing to tax themselves to maintain the quality of library service they have come to expect and that best meets their needs.
- No to elimination of small libraries. No to consolidation of public libraries.
- My husband and I both work. In the last two years we have had custody of two of our grandchildren. Our taxes have went up a lot, and I haven't even got spring taxes paid yet this year. I am worried about what we are going to do. We both work. We have had so much extra expense with family difficulties it is almost too much to bare. Looking for any ideas. Thank you.
- Please think carefully about the consolidation, especially when it comes to small libraries. People choose to live in our small Indiana towns. By removing libraries from small towns, you are cutting off a vital link that is more than an internet link, a collection of books. It's a community resource. The ALA has put it forth that all the small libraries have the READY TO READ programs which cost a lot of research. Let's not pull the plug on our efforts thus far. Older people who can't drive to the larger towns use the library for newspapers, knitting groups; it's a community source for every age. Please gather all the facts, visit small libraries, listen to what people are saying before we close small libraries and destroy systems that are working well.
- I am writing to you as a member of two separate library "friends" groups. Please do NOT consolidate our local libraries into one HUGE county-wide system. I fear that we will lose any voice we now have into library policies. I certainly do NOT want a large "one size fits all" plan for what I consider to be "my" libraries. Ordinary citizens have so little affect on government decisions, I would hate to give up what little sovereignty we have left. Thank-you for your consideration.
- The core problem is the irresponsible spending by each and every agency. Until spending is addressed and reduced, Indiana will never see it's way out of this pending disaster.
- Please think long and hard about the ramifications of closing our small libraries to the people in the communities and not just in your wallets.
- I think it would be a great disservice to the small towns to get rid of the smaller libraries, our library is a great resource to our small community. Can't you find something else to cut in the budget than something that is beneficial to the middle working class person in Indiana? How sad it will be to see our libraries disappear.
- We have a train problem on our street.
- I am writing to express that I believe consolidation of libraries would have a devastating effect on our local communities. I am writing this message on a computer in one of our local public libraries and without this small but convenient location I know that many local citizens would not have access to services such as computers, the internet or let alone the reading material that has long been provided at these institutions. Moving this resource further away would make this resource unreachable as many of these underprivileged Americans do not have transportation and would not be able to visit the library if not within walking or biking distance. Please remember those that are less privileged than ourselves when constructing your recommendations. I know that costs are high and our tax dollars are few but this is not a good area to make cuts.



- I live in between two libraries and use one more than the other. I like the way my favorite library does things and wish you would leave it the way it is. There is no need to connect all the public libraries. Thank you for your attention to this matter.
- I urge you to drop the idea of consolidating libraries.
- The plans I have seen regarding the elimination of township assessors, means to basically do away with county assessors (which in my county would be a wonderful thing), creating larger districts with a supervisor with small sub sections which would probably be a few consolidated townships. The biggest problems I see are paying the district supervisor enough to attract the sort of people you need; consolidating computer systems-money suckers that they are-and including processing deeds & GIS systems in the assessment duties. Outside of Marion County these-and not every one has a GIS yet-are totally separate from assessing functions. By basically consolidating townships, some much larger offices will have to be found-expensively. Local government is often the only contact people have with government. They can get at us, and they do. Taking away local control will not be popular and will probably cost more than it saves. If you decide to make changes-please, for once, allow enough time for the transition-finding people, offices, computer systems, etc.
- I am writing to you about consolidation of local libraries which is currently under review. I am against such a supposed cost cutting move by the Blue-Ribbon Commission. Local libraries are the heart and soul of small towns in Indiana. The local library has been a place where a town's citizens can meet to discuss various issues and concerns which are unique to its citizens. In a town without public transportation, the local library is often within walking distance for its clients, and more accessible. If hours or staff were to be cut, a local user may have no way to get up North to use a larger branch, or if a library's hours or staff are reduced, pretty soon, the user no longer goes to the local library, because its hours are not convenient. A local library is also a source of pride for the citizens of the town, as it is indeed in Lowell. Our local library reflects its citizens desire to be educated beyond formal schooling. As Cicero once said, "A room without books is like a body without a soul." Please to not consolidate local libraries in Indiana. If you do, you will kill the heart and soul of its' towns.
- I am against raising taxes concerning public support of stuff. I am against the food and beverage tax. I am against the South Shore and County income tax for Lake County. I oppose the wheel tax to build the convention center.
- I do not want libraries to be consolidated against their will. For those who desire to be, it is their prerogative. Most of us prefer to keep our libraries in our local communities which know our needs and serve us well. Our state and county governments would do well to tighten their purse strings and not spend as if there will always be an abundance of cash. They and we, the taxpayers, need to say no to projects that are beyond our means. In other words, make do with what we have and save for the future. Keep libraries in the local community and under local control. The other issue I wish to address is the one of Township trustees/ assessors. Again, I feel that having a person to whom I can address my concerns and needs is more valuable than the state taking money and saying they are saving me taxes when I don't see it happening. Whenever the state takes over, local people lose. This brings up a third issue.... State control over school funding. Again, I would rather keep our local school control in our own communities. It is much easier to voice my concerns at a local meeting than to go down state or wait until someone from the state office deigns to come to my area. All of our children have graduated from high school and are on their own; however, we are still concerned with our schools. We pay taxes to support them, and believe that we should have local control and voice in how this money is spent.



- Please keep my library in its own community. Please do not consolidate our library with regional library facilities. Keep the local library as a cornerstone to the our community and its future. Keeping the libraries local shows that you value learning and community growth in the heart of Indiana's small towns!
- I was misled by the government while trying to refinance through HUD.
- I would like to discourage the Commission from consolidating libraries
- Please don't close libraries.
- Libraries are important. Keep libraries intact.
- I am concerned about the possibility of libraries closing. I am opposed to it.
- I am opposed to librariy consolidation. There is no benefit to it.
- Please don't close libraries.
- I've lived in my county for about 4 years. I don't pretend to be knowledgeable about the various suggestions I've read about thus far regarding local government reform, though the recurring theme seems to be consolidation which in the business world is a way of life. I've recently been attempting to understand the recent real estate tax assessment by contacting the assessor's office. As I understand the process, subjectivity appears to come into play several times. Examples: the decision process in what constitutes a neighborhood (500+ in our area) and the value of a building (A, B or C). My opinion is that the current system is beyond reform and needs to be abolished. I'm in favor of an income tax and/or sales tax increase as a replacement. I thank the commission in advance for their fine work and am hopeful that tax reform will be high on the agenda.
- It would be a loss for our community if we had to consolidate libraries and I don't see how this would save the taxpayers any significant tax money when libraries receive such a small percentage of the total tax revenues. I believe the tax savings would be more significant if the costs of construction of new schools were scaled down.
- I am very much opposed to the recommendation of consolidating lcoal public libraries. It would be a major loss to my city if we were lose our downtown public library. Please consider our wishes and needs when considering consolidation of libraries.
- You may think this is a way to save money, but if you close any of these libraries, the people who use them will incur added transportation costs and inconvenience to use another facility.
- If small libraries close, I won't use them anymore.
- Regional Government: The state should be divided into 8 regions: Northwest (Gary), Northcentral (South Bend), Northeast (Fort Wayne), Westcentral (Terre Haute), Central (Indianapolis), Eastcentral (Muncie), Southwest (Evansville), Southeast (Columbus). The following county/township functions should come under that regional authority as appointed by the state executive with legislative oversight and approval: fire districts, emergency response, planning and zoning, and water districts. Consolidation: Townships should consolidate into the county or municipality in which the majority of the residents live. Libraries should be consolidated under the largest taxing unit of their parent county. End to urban Balkanization: When two or more municipalities share a border, they should automatically combine as one unit with the smaller municipality(ies) becoming part of the larger. All police should be combined city/county under the leadership of the county sherriff. First Class Cities should be split into two forms: 1st Class Capitol (for the State Seat), 1st Class Regular (for any city exceeding 250,000 residents that is not the seat of state government. First Class Regular cities should have a fluid number of city council members/districts based upon population. No council member should serve more than 25,000 residents per district. Any county with more than 250,000 residents with a majority of the residents living in an incorporated town should automatically consolidate city and county government with county commissioners



and council being consolidated into the city as councilmembers. Schools: Public schools should be run as a system similar to Indiana's Ivy Tech Community College with centralized state funding, and a state superintendent with regional offices overseeing the individual schools. At the very least all school districts should have a base resident population within their borders of at least 25,000.

- I think what people really want and need is significant reduction in government spending. When I am short on cash I simply cannot tell my employer I need more. I must make do with what I have and adjust my spending accordingly. I don't feel government is using the same standards for budgeting the average citizen. I think what is needed is a tax freeze at the current levels, and look for ways to reduce property tax burden placed on citizens. Maybe the governor can use some of the interest from the toll road lease money to help us survive the property tax burden. The answer is definitely not coming up with new and creative ways to tax the average citizen.
- I object to the very thought of consolidating libraries. Every library in the state is needed to be kept open in the town where located. How can families afford to take their children to use libraries miles from their local town? The cost of gas/fuel is becoming over-priced so much that when parents having to make choices between going to work or taking children to libraries, will have not choice. They must work. Sad, though, children must continue to read and learn. Some may never leave their small towns and the library is their way of going on vacation, via, books or videos. HOW CAN ANYONE EVEN THINK OF TAKING THE LIBRARY AWAY FROM THOSE WHO USE THEM, PAY TAXES TO USE THEM? THEY MUST NO LONGER HAVE CHILDREN WHO NEED THEM. THINK OF OUR CHILDREN!!!!!! What is the governor thinking of now? Selling the libraries to some foreign country to finance that country's health care system? THINK AGAIN BEFORE GOING FORWARD WITH THIS VERY INCONSIDERATE THOUGHT.
- I was alarmed to hear about the idea of consolidating or eliminating libraries as a potential solution to lower property taxes. In my town our library is an integral part of the community. It serves as a community and cultural center as well as a resource for books and audiovisual materials. The library serves our needs for information, entertainment and education. The library works in support of the school curriculum and helps parents to supplement the education provided by the schools. It would be devastating to my community and to my family is such an action were taken. I feel that as we try to emphasize the importance of education to our children, this certainly sends a bad message about what is important to an educated community. Most families that I know visit the library regularly with their children to encourage reading and literacy. None of these families could afford to provide their children with the number of books that they are currently reading from the library. The governor talks about finding ways to minimize "brain drain" in Indiana. Well, this is not step in the right direction. I implore those considering this drastic measure to look more carefully at the implications.
- I am an Indiana county resident for over 11 years now. In that time the state has now caused me to have to pay income tax in both Illinois and Indiana. Now you want to put 3 new taxes on us taxpayers? How many foreign visitors come to my county that it needs its own Visitors Bureau and Convention Center? If you want to find hard earned tax money, why not do away with the township structure? After all what does the township do for us? It is just another layer of government that we taxpayers have to support. The township just repeats everything that our local town government does for us. So get rid of the layer and do not raise taxes. Again I repeat NO NO NEW TAXES.



- Local libraries are very important to the community. Many students who live in the smaller communities will not be able to avail themselves to a library if they have to travel to another town. Our local libraries provide a very important service to the community in which they are situated. It would be a shame to deprive whole communities of the benefit of local libraries. KEEP THEM OPEN!
- I am asking that local libraries NOT be done away with! As a teacher I can tell you that kids who do not have computers, books, magazines in their home will be hurt by this mandate. They use the library as an extension of the classroom....at least here in my area. All three libraries have been excellent about meeting the needs of research, etc. in conjunction with our school library. Driving to another community to work in a library is just not an option for many students. I hope you will rethink this idea.
- With the price of gas it will cause an extreme hardship on our small communities to have to drive a half an hour to get to a library. DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO OUR RURAL COMMUNITIES. PLEASE!!
- I have recently received information from our local library here that our library could be closed down. Speaking for my family (there are nine of us altogether) we love our library and would hate to see it shut down. We have lived here for 14 years and the library was one of the reasons for our settling here. The other smaller towns around were without libraries. I am an avid reader and the rest of the family is too. We love being able to walk to our library and to check out material when needed. As home schoolers the library plays a big part in providing the reading and studying resources we need. I have fond memories of going to my local library as a child and I want these same good memories for my children. Please, do not shut our library down!
- Save our libraries. Literacy is a must!! Do not take this from our kids!
- Please reconsider closing public libraries - to some children this is an extension of our schools reading programs. Reading is essential to our youth and adults, I realize taxes need to be cut, but I feel that reading is not the way to go. I know you do everything you can and are exploring all options, but please consider cuts somewhere else. With the price of gas and both parents having to work, it will be impossible for some children to drive 25 miles to a library for books.
- Public libraries are an important function of local government. Indiana, like all states, is charged with public education. Libraries are an important part of that charge. It is irresponsible in a time when we are making efforts to improve the educational level of our citizens to remove one of the legs that supports it. Please protect public libraries.
- Please, for the sake of READING, do not close the town libraries. Consolidating libraries and making people commute in order to read a good book is a crime! In a day when reading comprehension and writing are so critical to test scores and the achievement of students, it is absurd to even consider closing public libraries. In a day when literacy is so important to all people, of all ages, closing libraries is absurd. I am willing to pay taxes to keep the small town libraries open!
- We need our local library. Reading is a valuable resource for all citizens, not just those living in big cities. Please don't close our small town libraries.
- I am concerned about the news that public libraries in the small towns of Indiana may be closed. The citizens of my town have worked very hard to build our local library. It is used year round by many in the community. Special events and programs are also held in the library. Nearby communities whose children all filter into the our school corporation also have very nice local libraries. If those are closed, everyone in the area will have to travel to another library. School children and senior citizens who can walk to the community libraries will no longer have that accessibility. Summer reading programs for children will cease to exist. In a time when we are trying very hard to encourage



children to read, this does not seem like a common sense thing to do. Public libraries in the United States have long history of success - why would we want to jeopardize that. Along with many others, I ask that this decision to close libraries be reconsidered.

- Please do not close local libraries in my towns. They are a vital resource to our children and adults in our communities.
- I just want to express my opinion that public libraries are essential for the good of our society. Good readers make citizens not only better educated and more well informed, they provide services critical to the improvement of our society. Good readers make better writers. Please do your part in helping to make sure even small towns around the state continue to receive funding for their public libraries. It would be a barrier for many people to have to drive 20-30 miles to use a library.
- I'm a nineteen-year-old graduate living in the small town in Indiana. Recently I was at our library and discovered the paper you put out concerning the "Consolidation of Libraries." Our family has always enjoyed being able to visit our library and quite frankly, we'd be terribly at lost without it. We're all avid readers and enjoy the quality of materials our town's library possesses. If you were to close down my library, we'd have to travel more than twenty-five minutes to visit another. The library was a huge help during my home schooling years in my studying, book reports, etc. Please do not close down our library. We love our town and the library is a huge asset to it.
- I can't tell you how important our public libraries are to our students and their families. We are asking more and more of our students and public schools, but we are not going to give them the resources to do what is needed. I encourage you to make changes in other areas, not in our public libraries.
- I am a middle school teacher and mother of two. Our family uses the public library in North Webster. We are hoping that our wonderful, new facility there will stay open. I'm confident that the Warsaw Public Library would not be utilized by my students and myself nearly as much as our local libraries are. Please keep our libraries open.
- As a child the public library was my sanctuary from a very troubled home. The books were a welcome escape, but just being able to walk into such a calming place was a blessing. My parents would not have taken me. I was very lucky to live within walking distance. Please do not take such a valuable resource from the children who need it most. The children who have involved parents probably would not be harmed, but for the majority that are like I was it would be like cutting off a lifeline. Cut the fat somewhere else and please leave these safe havens alone.
- One of the wisest investments for any community, no matter it's size, is funds designated for libraries.
- Public libraries, in the words of Jim Trelease, is "Where the Gold is Buried." He further states that a public library "is a town's or city's more important cultural and intellectual asset" and it is "the people's free university." In the study How in the world Do Students Read?, it was found the larger the school library, the higher the scores; the ten highest scoring countries have libraries twice as large as lower-scoring countries. Other startling information that should cause great concern in our communities is the relationship between poverty and illiteracy. 82% of prison inmates are school dropouts. 60% of inmates were raised in poverty. 60% of inmates are illiterate. We can arguable state that "Reading is the single most important social factor in American life today." Cutting funds to any library would be a horrible injustice to our communities and present and future generations.
- As an educator for over 25 years it is amazing to see how many students in small towns do use the local libraries! Are local library even has worked with the school and has labeled their books with the reading level and points that coincide with our school



reading program. Agencies already realize that one of the best practices for supporting reading is for the student/parent/school AND COMMUNITY to be connected and have the same goals. Our local library is also used by students after school that do not have parents at home after school. Several students will walk to the local public library and look at books and relax. Keep our libraries open for our kids and our communities! Thanks for your time.

- I think we need to identify the real problem. Taxes in Indiana are not all that high compared to other states. On the average we ranked 36th in 2005 and 29th among other states for 2006*. It is a pocket of homeowners who are suffering the most because of the change to market value (which everyone seemed to want) and the loss of business inventory. Some of this group includes: retirees; those with lower-than-average income who take advantage of easy credit that was beyond their normal means and now get higher than expected tax bills; rental owners; people with nicer, older homes. The problem is not the assessed values. Township and county assessors have done an excellent job of doing as they have been educated to do by the Department of Local Government Finance and the International Association of Assessing Officers. The answer is not in eliminating grass roots representatives. The assessments will become less accurate the further we get from the grass roots. The governor is going against the very foundation our country was built on—the grass roots. In my county the total assessors' budgets are less than 1% of the county's portion of the property tax for the county. Compare that to the millions of tax dollars we are responsible for generating through our assessed values. My main job as a Township Assessor is to be sure assessments are fair and equitable for all my taxpayers. Do you really think they will get as personal, fair, and equitable treatment if they lose their elected Township Assessor that lives in their township? One answer lies with each entity that uses tax dollars by reducing costs and waste. Another answer is by transferring welfare and school costs from the property tax to the State. I see nothing wrong with letting the more fortunate people who can afford buying things to pay higher sales tax and income tax. Give retirees and older people who have worked and paid taxes their entire life huge breaks so they can enjoy retirement. Some type of break should go to rental owners to encourage them to invest and improve properties. I would like to see incremental changes, not necessarily a complete overhaul of the state's tax system. * Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Tax Foundation
- I just heard the news that to save money lawmakers will be looking at closing our local libraries. What a horrible travesty that would be! I encourage you to take a moment to possibly visit some local libraries and find out first hand what a positive impact they have on the community. If you can't, let me share with you my own observations. I have utilized all three local libraries in our school corporation. Our towns have their own special pulse on the youth of the community. Each library could likely list at least a hundred activities and services they provide outside of books. And from what I've seen, most students who use the library are the students who live in town and tend to be in a lower income bracket. If these students didn't have the library to go to, I would guess that many of them would probably find something less constructive to do. Please find some other way to save money. If this plan is put into action you may well be cutting the heart out of each small town in this state. I think many people, including myself, would weigh this action heavily when voting again.
- I am writing on behalf of the people of my town. Please don't take our library away! For many people the library is their only source for books, computers and other reading materials. It would be a great disservice to the children of our community if you choose to close our library. There are many children who rely on the library for books to do research for school projects because the public library has different resources than the



school library. As a patron of the library, please keep it open for my family. My daughter is not able to visit her school library on a regular basis and uses the public library as her only source to check out books and other materials that she needs for school. Our family visits the library 2-3 times a week for different things. Please don't close our library!

- I work in a public school library. We have at times over 300 books circulated in just a 7 hour period. We are happy that so many students come and go from here each day, but we also know that there are many who use the public library as an added resource for the Accelerated Reader program in our schools. These buildings are especially important for small towns such as ours so that children of all ages have a supervised, appropriate, and educational outlet for summer and weekend holidays. It would be a huge disservice to our town and to all communities like ours to shut down our state funded libraries. For all the buildings that we give monies to historically preserve, shouldn't we try to preserve something as important and wonderful as the written word?
- Please don't close our library.
- My company developed an "industry-changing" innovation for commercial property tax assessment--VERY well suited for consolidation of property assessment efforts at the County or the State level. Greg Bowes now plans to use our system to reassess Marion County commercial property. It is also available Statewide--NOW. The innovation is called IncomeWorks, and it was co-written with an Indiana University Graduate (Churchill Scholar, 2001). THE PROBLEM THAT NEEDS FIXING: Commercial/Industrial (C/I) properties make up 7% of all parcels for property tax assessment, yet comprise about 25% of total property value in Indiana. Historic and current assessment practices for C/I property are inconsistent and inaccurate, and residential taxpayers often bear an unfair burden as a result. The 7% "tail" truly wags the entire "dog." Funding is sought, often resulting in 'quick fixes' with no basis in sound and lasting fiscal policy. Simply put, professional valuation technique and market-based accuracy for C/I property can now be leveraged, through automation, for all assessors via the web-based IncomeWorks® program. This automated technology effectively puts corrective lenses in front of assessors of all skill levels—supplying them with LOCAL market data and translating it into locally relevant and accurate assessments.
- Public libraries use such a small percentage (3.33%) of total property taxes collected, I don't see how consolidating or eliminating them will lower people's property tax bills. Libraries make our towns better places to live. Libraries provide all kinds of services to their communities that are unique to libraries (Storytime, Summer Reading Programs, Adult Reading Programs, Literacy Programs and so much more). Indiana already ranks 49th in education. Closing libraries is not going to improve that standing. Public libraries work with local educators so that students benefit. Please find somewhere else to make budget cuts--if the local taxpayers are willing to support their library and pay the tax, why should someone in Indianapolis decide our library is too small to keep funding?
- As a first grade teacher for over twenty years, I know how very important it is for children to have access to a public library during the summer and all year through. Libraries are a free goldmine for families all over the country. PLEASE do what it takes to save our libraries.
- Leave libraries alone. Consolidating libraries into county systems saves no money, would be expensive to administer, and removes any local community connection to a vital community resource. Library taxes are less than 4% of the total property tax. How much real savings are you going to squeeze out of that 4% by creating a larger, less flexible, administration/bureaucracy to run systems that are doing just fine by themselves



now? Leave libraries alone. Find another way to pay for them perhaps, but leave local libraries alone.

- I would like to express my feelings on the library issues that you are currently considering. My family and I use the our library on a weekly basis for our two children ages 5 and 6. The library is an integral part our children's education. We are blessed to have fantastic library staff with a great resource of books and other materials in our library. Keeping our library open and under it's own control is very important to the citizens of our town. Closing our library or centralizing daily operations with our county would be a great disservice to the people of our town. A local and respected library like ours greatly enhances the education of all our citizens. I respectfully request that our library remains open and retains control of all operations
- I believe that it would be a horrible crime for the local library here to be shut down. Even though the other Library may be a very nice place to visit, there is nothing more reassuring then knowing that you have your very own local library to come to, where you are more then just a face in the crowd. I understand that you believe that you are doing what is right for your state, but making people drive 20 miles out of their way to use the library, seems to me to be more then just an inconvenience, it would be like losing a part of your own family, that you have come to know and to love, and to also depend on. I go to college and the local library is were I do a lot of my homework, and it is close to home, which makes it easier for me and so many others to get to and from. I'm not the only one who feels this way, so please listen to all the voices that have something to say, even if you do not agree. Again it would be terrible to lose should a wonderful place.
- The plan to consolidate libraries is a poor plan. If Indiana is to improve its educational system, it needs to keep the small libraries. Has the education director, Ms.Reed, heard of this plan? Many local children go to our library several times a week. This would not be possible under your plan as the closest library then would be 20 miles away which their parents could not afford the gas or time to go to. This does not sound like "No child left behind." Not only would children be left out, many adults could or would not be able to drive 40 miles round-trip for a book so there goes any reading to children and grandchildren. Please rethink the consequences of this action.
- As a residents of my town and regular patrons of the local public library, we are totally against consolidating our library into another library system, namely the county library system. The local public library serves our communities quite efficiently and any merging of library systems can only dilute the services that we now enjoy.
- I just came from my local library...which I use nearly every day...and learned of the possibility of it being closed because of Mitch Daniels 'Consolidation of Libraries' program. I cannot state my opposition to this program strongly enough. This program is the absolute WORST idea that I have EVER heard of come from anyone in power in Indiana. We elected our congressmen and women to take care of us, not make our lives worse. We should be OVER-FUNDING our libraries, not closing them. The thought of closing libraries is so ridiculous on so many levels I cannot imagine that I would have to list them for you. If you don't feel the same way, I urge you to get OUT of public service and let someone that actually cares about the people of Indiana fight for our rights, not take them away. PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, DO NOT TAKE MY LOCAL LIBRARY AWAY!!!!!!!
- I know that there has been recent discussion about cutting state budgets, which may include ridding some places of public libraries. As a teacher and community member of my town, I feel this is a terrible idea. I do understand that budget cuts need to take place, but cutting local libraries is not the answer. We have so many children, young adults, and adults who use our public library for many things. Several students



participate in reading programs which helps them in school and improves literacy rates. Many middle school and high school students utilize the resources of the library for researching topics for school projects. The adults use the library for pleasure reading and to do research or learn new skills. As a teacher, reading is one of the most important skills a person needs to move through life as a self-sufficient person. Please do not do away with local public libraries.

- Please stop thinking about consolidating small library's. They are the life blood of small towns with everything from great children sections to family DVD's and CD's. They offer classes in music and art's and opportunities that are unequaled at any other local spot. We need to continue funding for our small libraries. It is a foolish decision to even think of cutting them.
- I was recently told of a possible decision to consider closing some local public libraries. I would urge you to reconsider as I believe this decision would have numerous negative ramifications. As a teacher of reading, I have seen first hand the joy on a child's face as they make a break through and successfully read a book on their own for the first time. For some kids, the local library is the only link they have to a world outside their own. Please do not take these opportunities away from them.
- Just wanted to let you know how important our Library is in our town. They run a wonderful children's program, and also adult programs. The workers at the library are very knowledgeable and caring. We take pride in our library like so many other small towns. If you take that away what do you think that will do to our "reading education" in our state? I would like you to look at ramifications if the libraries are closed.
- We need to save our public libraries.
- Please do not consolidate our libraries. My son and I go to the library here and also in a nearby town. It is very nice to be able to check out books without having to drive very far. If we did have to drive far, we probably wouldn't be able to go as often. My son is 6. He loves going to the library. He learned to read very early and he has an appreciation of and respects books. Of course this has a lot to do with our libraries! With the problems we already have with literacy, why take our libraries away? It never even occurred to me that this would be a possibility!! Why? Please don't!!
- I would like to comment on the consolidation effort to eliminate small or midsized libraries. I am a patron of my local library, and as a Language teacher in the Illinois system, I feel that I have a pretty good handle on what constitutes a well run library. The local library is well run and provides a great service to the community. I cannot fathom why with all the pork projects this state has condoned that one of the services that actually helps boost test scores of Hoosier children would be considered for elimination. You would be doing a great disservice to future readers to eliminate this great institution. All of my children have graduated from high school and two have degrees from Purdue University and enjoyed the benefits of their local library when they needed them. Please reconsider this measure as a way to balance the budget. If it is broken, please don't try to fix it.
- Please, do not close local libraries. They are too important to the education process, and they keep small communities in touch with what is going on in the world. Too many people would be adversely affected by the loss of a nearby community access to information, not to mention the function as a community gathering place. At a time when we are advocating the importance of education we do not want to lose one of the places where a person has the opportunity to broaden their available knowledge.
- I am a business owner and homeowner in the state of Indiana, thus I feel I have a good idea of the issues involved. I wanted to express the opinion that taxing one's assets (a home) is a poor way to raise tax funds. If I wish to blow my money on luxuries, I am not



continually taxed on that money spent, but if I wish to invest it in land or a home, then I am taxed on it for the rest of my life, eventually paying twice for it over a 50 year period (50 years x 2% tax). It hurts most those least able to pay the taxes, the poor and elderly. Some elderly retire only to find out that they can no longer afford to live in their homes because of the taxes and are forced to move to more affordable homes or low tax areas. This is a shame. A better choice would be consumption tax. It only taxes those that consume the most, the rich more than the poor. The elderly consume the least, thus they are not taxed out of their homes. It encourages savings and discourages consumption, which is what society needs to be doing. Raising the sales tax also has the nice effect of bringing in additional revenue from non residents like tourists, who then are paying say 8% sales tax instead of the current 6%. Another advantage of eliminating the Property Tax and going to only a consumption code is that millions of dollars will be saved by not having to hire assessors, hire appraisal firms, hiring lawyers to fight "unfair" appraisals etc. I know in my county alone that one area spent \$1.5 million for an outside firm to appraise the homes, and it was done so badly that their appraisals were tossed out. Each county has multiple assessors each costing wages, expenses and retirement, as well as staff. Each county spends huge sums of money to collect this tax. This entire expense can be eliminated by going with a large sales tax.

- Our small communities are being decimated by big businesses, big churches and greediness. Our communities are now hearing that the community libraries are being threatened. In small town America, where the real folks live and raise their children, we need our libraries. Not everyone in these towns has computers and for many, the library provides this service. We want our children to be literate and not be plugged in all the time. At 3% of the budget, the library is doing more with that small amount to do good things in the small towns than ever. Please do not disrupt this lifeline for our people.
- I suggest that everything be on the table as to why we govern as we do. Every office should be studied to determine if it is still the best practice to keep doing what we are doing. With computerization of public records we do not need the number of persons that has been customarily been the case in city and county offices and cannot afford to pretend that nothing has changed. With the ability for any and every person to access this information from the Internet will free up everyone to operate more efficiently. We also need to consider school choice to be the way that parents become consumers in education for their children, competition always leads to better and more efficient delivery of products and services. If we were to raise our sales tax to 11% studies in the past have indicated that we could eliminate property taxes.
- Remove the following from property taxes: State Fair Board, State Fair should be self-supporting through gate charges and fees; State Forestry Fund, State Department of Natural Resources tree nurseries should charge enough for services to be self-supporting; County Child Welfare Costs should be a state responsibility; County Juvenile Correction costs should be a state responsibility; All township functions--township government is obsolete, outdated and redundant. However, elimination of township government would probably require a process similar to the constitutional process required to totally eliminate property taxes. In the interim, at least shift property assessment to a centralized county-level office or to a state-level office for consistency; School Grant Fund --with appropriate legislative safeguards, i.e. a combined Tuition Reserve Fund/State School Support Rainy Day Fund, there should be reduced concern about removing the stable property tax revenue stream; Special Education Pre-School Fund should be a state obligation that can be logically transferred from property taxes. To generate funding the General Assembly should retain at the state level all property tax relief like Property Tax Relief credit Funds, Homestead Credit Funds; institute a 2% increase in the State Income Tax; rescind recent legislation allowing each county to



increase local income taxes by 2% in a uniform state-wide action. The Income Tax is progressive and easy to administer whereas the Sales Tax is regressive, therefore, do not increase the Sales Tax. Make the Wheel Tax a universal state-wide user fee dedicated only to maintain local roads. Please consider a two year certified Assessment Value cycle to avoid Assessment Value delays due to trending and extended exemption filing periods. Consider this concept to set the values for farmland.

- Please do not close our local libraries! I work in Title 1 at the local school trying to help those students who are not reading well. They need to have free books available to them in a local location that they can walk to or at least not far from their homes. Please don't defeat our purpose and close the libraries!
- I have trouble understanding why library consolidation and possible closure of the small town libraries is being considered when we are striving to leave no child behind. How many school libraries are open past 4:00 or during the summer (most close for business two weeks before the end of school for inventory). How many families would be able to drive the 20 miles to their new library? Our community has worked hard to have its own library, beginning in 1914 when Andrew Carnegie was first contacted. The character of the building has been maintained and just this summer, a State Historical Marker was dedicated in the front yard. Could we remain open as a branch library? Possibly, but with building expansion projects at the "county seat" library, there is a real fear that our tax money will be used for their building and not locally as has been done with the consolidated school system in which the city has two new schools now. Townships have been allowed to merge with libraries and libraries have been allowed to merge when the residing taxpayers see a need for merger. What becomes of democracy when mergers are forced? There are so many other points to be made, such as the opportunity for life long learning at the local library. I hope you are open minded and clear thinking in this matter that could adversely affect so many local citizens.
- Do not close our library.
- Will you come to local government offices and see what we do?
- I have some comments relating to reforms in local government that I support. 1. I believe that the issue of tax abatements must be reviewed. The use of tax abatements has gotten out of hand. I believe the section of the Indiana Code referenced for abatements is being misused. In reading this section of code, it details areas that cannot support growth. Most abatements given in my county are given to corporations locating in a commercial development already developed with roads and utilities. This does not define an area unable to support growth. In fact, these developments have already seen significant growth and the abatements are nothing more than profit enhancers for the corporation. 2. The issue of tax abatements is a moral issue to me. Collection of property taxes based upon assessed value is a means to collect stable revenue to support the services of government. To help defray the cost of government, both individuals and corporations pay property taxes to support the services they receive. This system provides for a system that spreads the cost of government so that individuals were not hit the hardest. With the issuing of tax abatements, corporations are not paying their fair share and are thus transferring their cost onto the backs of individuals. 3. Assessment of property taxes based upon value is a system that partly works in my opinion. The problem revolves around the fiscal resources required to continually update assessed values. I believe that there should be one thorough assessment done and then assessment values raised yearly based upon cost of living. This should be done yearly with a thorough reassessment done every ten years. 4. Education funding should be assumed by the State and a set fee established to support each student. By statute, this fee should cover both operating and capital costs to educate said student. It is utterly an



embarrassment to look at the educational facilities in the suburbs and compare them to the facilities in the inner city and rural areas. This leads to inequities and must be rectified to show that Indiana does in fact desire the equal education of all students. 5. I do believe that Township Government can be abolished and the duties transferred to County Government. This is coming from someone who has served as a Township Board Member from 2005 to present. 6. Indiana should look at establishing more stringent criteria to qualify candidates for County Government. The duties of the Treasurer, Auditor and Assessor are becoming much more complex and it is time to establish educational/experience requirements. 7. The Indiana Code should be modified to disqualify some elected positions from receiving benefits. I served as a County Commissioner from 2001-2004 and a Member of the County Council from 1999-2000. While holding those positions, I was the member that was not enrolled in the County Health Insurance Program since I held a full-time job and had health insurance through my employer. I would have saved money by dropping my private insurance and going on the County program but I did not feel it was moral to seek elective office for personal gain. I was the only member of either board that practiced that philosophy and I am pretty sure that was the only reason the majority of the members on those boards ran for office. If the position is not a full-time position, benefits should not be received.

- I am writing in response to the consolidation of our libraries and any other local agencies being considered for consolidation with county government. I do not support this recommendation. County government agencies have difficulty running their offices and I do not want my local agencies to be a part of that system. I think they need to fix their own problems before taking on additional responsibilities.
- There has been articles in our local paper concerning the governor's request that the Commission of Local Government Reform consider the consolidation of public libraries and possibly the elimination of small and mid-size libraries. This troubles me greatly. As you are surely aware our beautiful library/learning center burned down just over a year ago. The newly rebuilt library will soon be opening and I expect it will get as much use as the prior one did. I live next to it and I know that excluding Sundays there were always classes and events happening and the library was always busy with people researching, checking out books, videos, movies, using the internet, etc. I realize we are a small rural community but the loss of our library would put a great burden on all who used it. I would not be able to travel to another county to use another library and as a retired person I spend my free time reading. I just hope you will not be guilty of depriving our county and our citizens of the privilege of having a library. Whatever your personal feelings may be don't let them get in the way of robbing the citizens and voters of Warren County of a library.
- These taxes are outrageous for people on fixed incomes. My husband served two tours of duty in Viet Nam, is a decorated veteran, worked his whole life and is semi retired. In return, the govt he protected is raising the taxes out of his reach and we could loose our home. Not a very fair exchange for a man who risked his life, and nearly lost it. We are already trying to live on \$19,000 a year and now the taxes are taking another \$1000 out of what we already have trouble living on. Pretty ridiculous for a 60 yr old house on a city lot. Most of the people over 50 live on half that. I'd like to see our politicians that are spending money hand over fist, with 6 digit incomes of there own, live on what we try to live on. They wouldn't last one week.
- Stop consolidation of small and mid-sized libraries.
- I would like to make a few points about why, in my opinion, that would be a mistake for the people in rural areas and smaller towns of Indiana to consolidate libraries. I have always lived either near or in a small town and have always loved to read. I am sure that



many small town libraries have been a part of that town's history. Children of the community have a chance to partake in storytime and make crafts and there are special events for holidays. The elderly citizens of my community have an easily accessible place in town to check out a book and get computer access with someone readily available to help them. Teens and adults alike have computers available if they do not have a computer at home. I can't think of one time that I've been to the library when someone hasn't been taking advantage of that service. These may seem like trivial points, but maybe the most important point is that all of these things are being done in OUR community. The librarians know their patrons and there's a feeling of family and community in a small town library. Please don't take that away from us.

- Our local libraries are a very essential part of our communities. We in our township love and use our library regularly. We added a large new addition to our library 3 1/2 years ago. Since that time our library has become a hub of activity in our area where we hold numerous governmental, support, educational, and other meetings and activities. Closing our library would be an enormous hardship on everyone from children to the elderly as the nearest library would be 15 miles away. This would essentially eliminate any use of a library for most people, especially children. Please vote "NO" to consolidation of our libraries.
- "Consolidating" the libraries would be detrimental to this community in that the main objective this and other neighboring libraries have is to improve literacy. This library in particular has provided services and activities that many rural people had not been exposed to. The programs and classes held here are personalized whereas those not proficient with computer skills are given individualized care and attention. Also many disabled people, children and seniors are dependant on use of the facilities at the public library.
- Ideas to streamline local government: 1) Eliminate township duties to the county. One person to represent towns without trustee. 2) Hire human resource company to hire county workers to eliminate patronage. 3) Eliminate duplication of services to county. Combine library branches. 4) Reduce county council to three members and county commission to one. 5) Combine town health services to one county health service with satellites. 6) Remove school funding from real estate tax. 6) Welfare should be the state's responsibility.
- I work in a County Surveyor's Office and suggest they compare the different counties and their setups.
- I am writing to let you know that we need our public library here in my town. Our teachers make use of its resources in the classroom.
- Our public library has programs that caters to children and adults as it is now. Who knows what would happen to those programs if consolidation were to take place.
- From those who discussed their concerns yesterday at the forum in Ft. Wayne, my overall impression was that the various communities/counties representatives who spoke were asking for home rule charters in essence. It is my understanding that home rule charters would allow Indiana counties to restructure their governments so that they have the power to deal with their particular problems and needs. I know this issue was addressed back in 1999 by the Indiana Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations but it needs to be addressed again. Since our counties and the various communities within range from urban to suburban to rural, this they have varying needs. They need different structural arrangements to allow them to produce different policy outputs. For my county, the present structure of 12 County Council members and 3 County Commissioners is the biggest negative impact on the ability of this county to deliver services efficiently and effectively. This county's government with all its elected



offices is nothing but a bunch of little petty competitive fiefdoms (as recently described to me by a local judicial officer). We need professional management/executive leadership. I think this county needs a professional executive position that requires an MBA or MPA. I think we need some kind of oversight/advisory board consisting of an economics professional, a tax professional, a law professional, a business professional, and a public policy professional. I am astonished at the petty, rude, and just plain stupid comments and behaviors exhibited by the commissioners and council members I've had to deal with over the years. I also terms should be limited for elected offices. I encourage the Commission to review "Home Rule in Ohio Counties: Legal and Constitutional Perspectives" by Stephen Cianca, 1994 University of Dayton Law Review [19 Dayton L. Rev. 533] if you have not already done so. This article addresses Hamilton County (Cincinnati). It discusses home rule, alternative methods for electing legislators, vesting of municipal powers, and the effect on other governmental units. It also provides a model home charter.

- I understand that you are interested in finding out how the new food stamp programs are working. They aren't working at all. I have clients who are on pregnancy medicaid who are showing up as closed cases and can't get their case worker to respond to them. If I try to call any case worker on my list, at any time, it always says that the voice mailbox is full and then you transfer to the supervisor's mail. If, by chance, the supervisor's mailbox is not full, I leave a message that is never returned. If I get treated like that while working at an agency for poor relief, I would hate to see how average clients are being treated. The employees at the front desk at Family and Social Services Administration are being so overwhelmed with the problems being taken out on them that they now treat everyone poorly. Someone needs to do some "secret shopping" and see how they think the process is working.
- I would like to comment in support of local library systems. In my town, we have an excellent local system which has a grass roots support which would not be enhanced through consolidation.
- I was very happy with the format, facilitator, comments-just the whole forum in Fort Wayne. What I was disappointed about was the small attendance. Our area does not receive Indianapolis television stations. Most people do not read the Indianapolis Star. If they take a "city" paper it is one of the local ones. However, most folks take either the county seat/largest town in the county daily. Others just rely on their small town weeklies. I work for one of those. We did not get a press release about the forum until the day after it happened. What's going on? I heard that about 300 people turned out in Gary. I would assume because of more media saturation of its population. Also, several people were confused when local TV ran a notice that a forum was to be held nearby at noon but it wasn't on your website. I think many more people would've come if more publicity had been issued in a more timely manner.
- I am writing in regards to the possible closing of the public libraries. My family uses our public library often and if it were to close because our town doesn't serve 10,000 people, the closest library would be 20 minutes away. If that was the case we would no longer be able to use it as often if at all or sign up for as many programs (such as storytime for my children), because of the distance. Please reconsider closing these small town libraries, because there are some in our area that are not supported at all by tax dollars.
- Give the seniors a break so they don't pay property taxes. On a fixed income the majority don't have increase in their income so it would give them a break to pay for medications, etc.



- Please consider the unique multi-facet services a local library provides to its community before recommending that they become part of a larger entity that may not have the local community in its best interest. Small town libraries, with non-paid board members, provides their communities with cost effective unique programs and services that are tailored to meet the needs of their patrons.
- Please keep in mind the risks of unintended consequences as solutions are proposed. In particular, please consider the difference in needs between counties with 50,000 people versus those with 250,000 or more. Same with cities of 15,000 versus those with 75,000 or more. Consolidation of functions may lead to benefits in smaller municipalities. My experience is that larger cities or counties need independent boards to oversee the work of libraries and airports. Increase the ability of appointing elected officials to remove appointees, but don't make these elected positions. We get great impartial action and board members because of the absence of politics. Commissioners and mayors do not have time to do this vital work and represent the community. A single library board for my county could NOT represent the varied interests of different communities.
- This is with out a doubt the dumbest plan that I have ever heard because in small communities it is easier to access the internet because of high prices by going to the local libraries. So in other words you would most likely cause a large drop in graduation, because many students use libraries to assist with homework. Also because of the demographical population you would cause undo hardships to the citizens of most counties because of the population being sparce in the farm comunities. So in other words this bill would be ridiculous to impose on the citizens of Indiana. So, if you are prepared to still go through with this be prepared to experience a major drop in graduates when people look back they will remember that this committee will be to blame for lower education levels and increased unemployment.
- In my opinion, it doesn't matter what recommendations you come up with, when the politicians and special interest groups get done with it, it will be as bad or worse than it is now. The problem with the present system is the politicians staff the system with people who helped me get elected and not with people who have the know how. Another problem is there are those who are in charge of a department who simply are not interested in saving tax money and continue to spend without using common sense. A good example is the libraries in some counties. Until there is a system to control spending there will be no system that will accomplish what the state needs. As far as the property tax system, that's another story.
- I feel you are making a big mistake by eliminating small-you-mid size library systems. You government officials who have money, and who have probably never done a days hard labor in your life, and live in big cities, have NO CLUE what small town living is about, nor do you know how much things like this mean to the towns people. I think you need to dip into your own pockets or give up your \$1000.00 dinners etc. to take care of tax reform, and/or budget costs. Big-city government should leave the small towns alone. A lot of people in small towns do not have the means to travel to a bigger city to access libraries.
- To find big savings and make big progress takes big ideas, not half-hearted ones. One must most certainly upset the status quo. Therefore, I propose that thinking along the lines noted below, might be one approach to consider: 1-start with a blank slate. No government entity is "safe" from being reconsidered. 2-think about how many units of government might be a desirable maximum (currently we have thousands I am guessing). 3-think about the long term in two ways. First, in what we need to do in the upcoming years, and what we can see down the road in 25-50 years. As such, my thinking is that we should permit EACH county to have only the following government



structures. a-a single governing structure for EACH of the county's incorporated areas (cities, towns, etc). b-a single governing structure for the county's unincorporated areas as a whole. What would reside within each of those governing structures (to be called LGU, or Local Government Unit, in all cases)? 1-Each would have one elected executive (to be called Mayor in all cases). 2-Each would have one legislative body (called Local Council in all cases). What departments would the Mayor run? Who would comprise the Local Council? The LGU would be responsible for the following: *public infrastructure, *public safety, *sanitation and health, *schools, and *libraries. The taxing districts for what are now, for example, city, school and library, would be overlaid to all have the same boundaries. The LGU would run the above-bulleted responsibilities in a single geographic area, no exceptions. Who sits on the charter Local Council? The current school boards (that overlay a particular city) would send an appropriate fraction of their members to the LGU. For example, a 6 member board whose jurisdiction currently cuts across a city and an unincorporated area, would send 3 members to each new LGU. The same for Libraries. Those fractional additions would join the existing City Council (or County Council) members, to form the charter LGU. Later, when LGU members need to be elected. The number and mix shall be large enough that there can be 4 sub-councils -- each to have expertise in one of the bulleted areas above (combining schools and libraries due to their common missions). The library/school sub-council shall act as the school board and library board. The sanitation and health sub-council shall deal with any govt owned hospitals, trash and sewer, and board of health issues. The public safety sub-council shall deal with police, fire and homeland security. The public infrastructure sub-council shall act as the Board of Public Works and Parks Board. Together the four sub-councils meet as a full Local Council. In such elections all positions are "at large." The world has shrunk too much for getting THAT local these days, to have district representatives. However, there would be at large candidates for EACH sub-council--so that candidates can be vetted based upon their area of expertise. You do these things with fewer people, but you make them full time (and fully funded) jobs if necessary so that capable professionals can afford to take such a job. And you prohibit these subcommittees from forming subordinate boards and subcommittees beyond two more deep, unless they are unpaid boards. I know there are flaws in here somewhere, but I hope it will spark some creative thinking. And oh, yes, any state law that arises to mandate these, or similar transformations, should also set a 25-50 year horizon, wherein two more things have to happen: 1-LGUs will be required to combine at that time if their metropolitan areas have combined (for example, perhaps the nine donut counties become "Indianapolis' LGU".) 2-reform the State legislature so that each county has one Senator and each LGU has one house representative. At a minimum, ensure that their districts match the districts of the LGUs.

- I have never been so angry about a government issue as I am at this moment after finding out your proposed plan to cut libraries that serve less than 10,000 people. Can you read your own pie chart that shows libraries take 3% of the taxes compared to the bloated schools that take over 50% and continually produce illiterate students? Stop overfunding the schools, give school vouchers for choice which will reward schools that perform, and stop wasting our money. Property taxes are not an endless pocket of money for your greedy hands. I would rather see you stop funding the schools than the libraries and you need to stop hiding this issue from the public. A very very angry taxpayer.
- I have received the "Update on property taxes" from Senator Jim Arnold. I am disappointed in the options presented here. I do not see any relief to the taxpayer if the taxes are simply juggled from property tax to sales tax or local tax or taxing services. How can this be presented as relief? I feel insulted by the state and its representatives



even thinking I would fall for this. The way to give us taxpayers relief is to run the government like a business. If the bottom line is not what it should be, then the expenses are cut. For example, traveling first class when coach is available, take home vehicles should be eliminated. Unnecessary personnel eliminated, I am sure there are many ways to cut government spending. You (the government) need to live within your means. If you cannot run the government efficiently, it should not be my responsibility to bail you out.

- Please keep our libraries separate and local. We need our tax monies to be kept local and consolidating will only cut the services we already enjoy. If it ain't broke, don't fix it and our local library is not broke!!!!
- Surely it is only a far-fetched rumor that someone would even have a single, solitary THOUGHT that it would be a good idea to save tax dollars by closing even a single, solitary library in this state! That is absolutely an incredibly stupid idea to shut off a source of intellectual, educational, personal growth, learning, stimulation, and civilization! Please tell me this is just a stupid rumor someone has started to get a rise out of us!
- Libraries are a part of the cultural center of towns. Libraries serve as centerpieces of knowledge acquisition, learning centers, and community programs. They are a part of the identity of the individual towns. It was not that long ago that, through much fundraising, sweat and tears, and hard work, the my library became a real state recognized library. I would be remiss if I let this newly funded library be wrested from our town, either through consolidation or elimination. Throughout history in all great societies, the library has been an itegral part of every town. Would our towns be better if the libraries were not there? Would we be better off without the opportunity to visit a local library? How are kids supposed to ride their bikes to a library that is 20 miles away in the closest town over 10,000 people? I think these questions need addressed before a decision is made that would affect the lives of the people that live in the 498 towns in Indiana with less than 10,000 people.
- Why are you trying to consolidate libraries when they only get 3% of the property tax dollars? Wouldn't your cost saving measures be better served with a higher dollar item to be reformed? Our small town library serves many who would not be served by a main library in the county seat. Our local librarian serves many elderly patrons with deliveries. Many school children use the library and computers on their walk home from school. Removing the library will further hasten the decline of small-town America. The town revolves around the school and the closeness of services like the library. People actually choose to live here rather than the county seat to give their children a chance to "be somebody" in a smaller school setting. Our library can provide the personal attention patrons deserve for their tax dollar. Our library and school governing boards are staffed by volunteers who have the community's best interest at heart. Serving on the board is often a thankless job, but rewarding to know that we are doing something to make our community a better place for the citizens. I am on the library board, appointed by the school where I teach. I am asking your board to carefully consider the consequences of consolidation.
- I read a column today that I couldn't agree with more saying that local government should be consolidated. The priorities are not right. Redundant is the big word here. I am sending this article because I feel strongly that the suggestions made are the first steps to consolidating and eliminating and making politicians accountable to the taxpayers. It's belt tightening time...we taxpayers' are being taxed left and right. We need a reprieve. End the patronage! There were some good moments Monday, including hearing a participant report back to the crowd that the people at his table recommended having just one county commissioner instead of three. A few of the other good ideas I heard: *



Cross-train employees so customers get answers faster. One woman told my group of waiting for months to hear back on a zoning variance she has requested. She still doesn't have an answer. *Instead of operating such large buses, use smaller ones that are more fuel-efficient and appropriately sized for the number of passengers they carry. *Eliminate patronage. * Eliminate township government, putting those duties elsewhere. *Perform cost-benefit analyses to determine whether services should be public or private. *Consolidate library and school districts, then provide equitable distribution of resources. *And one of my personal favorites: Vote! Maybe you're not a big fan of Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, but learn this lesson from him. Think big. He appointed this commission, after all. I strongly encourage you to dream of the government you would like to have, not just what you expect, and send your big ideas to the commission. Without your input, the mandate for major reforms will be weak, and your taxes will continue to reflect that.

- My husband and I are 100% in favor of consolidating the libraries, eliminating or reducing local government services and functions and eliminating some of the local government offices and county/township tax assessors. Something drastic has to be done in Lake County to stop the wasteful spending.
- Please do not consolidate public libraries and eliminate small and mid-sized library systems. I have cards and use both two library systems, and I consider the one system to be far superior to the other system. In this day and age when literacy is encouraged and the lack of literacy is such an issue, consolidating public libraries and eliminating small and mid-sized library systems would be the wrong move.
- I thought you may be interested in Lessig's Lecture on Corruption.
http://lessig.org/blog/2007/10/corruption_lecture_alpha_versi.html (Lecture one hour long)
- Please leave my library alone. It is a vital part of my community and serves it well. Its programs and open door to local organizations helps to preserve the unity and cohesiveness of this area. Our local library board knows and responds to the need of the community and the community responded to the library's when there was a fiscal crises a few years ago. Our country needs more neighborhood involvement not less.
- I oppose Indiana library consolidation. I don't want my community and I to risk losing control of our small, local library if it is merged with a larger system. And, I certainly don't want to have to travel almost twice as far to the next larger library, if my local library is closed.
- Stop
- Please let us keep our local libraries. We have such a great library. Whenever I visit - it is so busy with people of all ages. We have a wonderful summer reading program. The opportunity for young people to have access to free books year round is a wonderful asset to our society. We all know how important reading can be to having academic success for our children. Please let us keep our town libraries. I know that the surrounding towns have wonderful programs for all age groups.
- It is rare, I'm sorry to say, that the government is available for citizens to offer their thoughts and comments in a civil and non-political setting. Below are some comments and thoughts to the Commission: 1) I believe that consolidation of governmental service providers must be weighted against the economic/financial savings and loss of local/community involvement. I think a good example that points out the "local" influence is township welfare versus individual safety communication centers within a county. The citizen calling 911 does not care where the 911 call center is but does care in the response from "local" safety police/fire. So, consolidation of communication centers within a County makes sense to me and I'm sure there is a financial benefit and



improved training possible. 2) Since some services are provided by cities and county citizens use those services it may make sense to allow county wide districts for services such as: Airports, police/Fire/Safety, SWAT Teams, Bomb squads, Hazmat response teams, Disaster Management, Communication Centers, Parks. 3) I believe that there exist significant public monies being spent without on-going elected official oversight. In my city's case the following are examples of this situation: Municipal Water Utility (Spending for 2006 - \$6,001,478), Municipal Wastewater Treatment Utility (Spending for 2006 - \$8,154,261), Redevelopment Commission – TIF monies which directly increase property taxes for taxpayers. The 2006 spending is not clear from the readily available public information. Library – Local library services a larger area than just the City's. I believe that to investigate reorganization of government, unfunded mandates need to be considered as they can have significant impact on local requirements. I'm not sure how that fits into the Commission's "charter" but it is an interesting and uncontrollable influence on local costs and organization. As off the top example is the mandated storm water runoff control additions to both the County and City organizations. I believe State officials can pass laws/mandates without funding and putting the burden on local government. Other costly mandates include school bus replacements after 10 years of use (regardless of condition) or State school building code requirements maybe more expensive than accepted commercial standards. I have prepared several schedules for my specific tax situation but which identify, in my opinion, some of the critical few dollar cost issues versus the trivial many. Xcel File -Comparison of '02,'03,'04,'05,'06,'07 tax rates. This spreadsheet identifies several interesting trends and magnitudes: The mix of property tax rates for the various taxing entities – The most significant trend in this specific instance is the increased spending by the City with its share of the tax rate increasing at an average annual rate over the last five years of 5.91%. Interestingly, the schools share (mix) of the rate has been declining from 46.4% to 44.5% over the same period. Welfare rates are down by an average annual rate of over 1%. This rate is only 4.0% of the total property tax rate. Township rates are but 0.4% of the total tax rate burden. What significant or insignificant amount of money is to be saved versus "approved" increases by larger taxing bodies? It is not to say that all county/township/city combinations that exist in Indiana will exhibit the same characteristics, but each will be unique and therefore the recommendations for change must consider one-size does not fit all. Remember – sitting on a hot stove with your head in a freezer does not make you comfortable even when the average temperature is. Xcel File – Tax Payment increase Causal Analysis – Tax 2006 Pay 2007 – This spreadsheet identifies several interesting facts and magnitudes: My increase in property tax assessment offset by a higher homestead deduction (good for only this year) raised my tax bill by a net of 11%. The expected rate decrease due to increased total assessment of 12% was offset by the loss of inventory assessed values of 10.5%. My real tax rate increase was 6.6% and is consistent with the increased identified above file/schedule for the City of Elkhart. The State's reduction of the PTRC% and Homestead Credit% of greater than 15% was greater than the one year increase of homestead deduction and increased my property tax bill by 6.5%. From my personal perspective, these issues are not significantly related to township costs or local schools share of my property tax burden. I would like to offer the observation that as long as Indiana law requires the trending and current assessment method, elimination of the Township Assessors will not result in ANY significant savings. The process dictates detail work that will still be required and, most if not all, of the staffing, including the assessors, currently involved. Therefore elimination might be in "name and appearance" only while moving the work responsibility one step further away from the citizen. Why not change the method of establishing the taxable value to a less labor intensive method



to the model used by other states were principal value is set on transfer of title and building permit value addition with a set annual increase for all property. Also, improved technology for use by the Assessors and “links” to State income tax records should/could improve the collection of personal property taxes. Further, I would like to comment regarding the tax levy process and the impact of the DLGF. Are they the “approvers” of the property tax levies and capital projects, then why have local governments go through the exercise and illusion of having approving a budget? Again thank you for your efforts in this very complex area of investigation and the opportunity to voice my thoughts.

- I was pretty young when the Hoosier lottery started, but was it not created with the partial intention of property tax relief/abolishment in addition to the excise tax relief? I believe revenue from casino gambling was supposed to reduce costs to parents for school books, it hasn't happened in our county. Why not redistribute some of these funds for property tax relief and other items to help the people of the state.
- Strategy: enhance public safety performance, efficiencies, and accountability. • Combine all township & airport fire departments into the Indianapolis Fire Department. The key element of the combined agency will be to institutionalize credentialing for fire department emergency personnel. • Stabilize the financial impact on citizens by freezing the fire levy at the 2008 level for three years. • Place the governance of all public safety services under The Mayor of Indianapolis, as of 2011. • Eliminate the office of County Coroner by constitutional amendment and replace it with a regional medical examiner system statewide, as of 2011. • Make the salaries the same for the Marion County Sheriff and the Marion County Prosecutor, as of 2011. Any additional income currently earned by the Sheriff as a result of fees collected, would be used instead to fund police pensions. II. Strategy: Reduce local government inefficiencies and improve accountability to local citizens. • Eliminate the offices of Township Trustee and Town Board, and assign all their current duties to county agencies, including township assistance (formerly known as poor relief) services to the Marion County Welfare Department, as of 2011. • Establish a division of Small Claims Courts within the Marion County Superior Court System and maintain function and location within each township, as of 2011. • Eliminate the office of Township Assessor and replace it with a statewide assessment system, as of 2011. • Combine the duties of the elected offices of Marion County Treasurer, Marion County Auditor & City of Indianapolis Controller, as of 2011, and cross-train the staff. • Impose a term limit of two 4-year terms onto the office of the Mayor of Indianapolis, grandfathering in the current mayor. • Increase citizen accountability for the City County Council by eliminating the four at-large seats, reducing to 25 community based district seats, as of 2011. • Align the office of Township Constable with modern government practices through the implementation of professional credentialing and cost containment of salaries. This streamline measure will combine the Township Constables and the Marion County Sheriff's Civil Sheriffs into a Warrant Officer court service within the Superior Courts. Constables will be required to have the usual and customary training and credentialing for law enforcement officers with similar powers. Contemporary government practice requires attention to accountability and performance with a strong sense of fiscal discipline. Hoosiers demand and deserve government services proportionate to what they pay in taxes. The initiatives listed above in my opinion represent reasonable and measurable objectives building high performance structures in Marion County and State of Indiana governments. I request that you take advantage of the hard work and detailed research put into The Merritt Government Reduction Plan, as I believe it provides leverage for productive discussion. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide additional information regarding this plan and the legislative package I intend to introduce.



- I have much to say about taxes at the Franklin forum.
- As a school media specialist, I am very concerned about the possible consolidation and closing of our public libraries. Our citizens need these public libraries. We have several small branch libraries and public libraries in our area who have remodeled and have excellent buildings and staff. They are a real warehouse of information. These libraries offer excellent reading programs, story hours, and interesting speakers for all of the community. I think it's wonderful that Ind. ranks second in library visits per capita, and Ind. ranks 3rd in collection expenditures per capita. Our libraries are always busy and well-used. Our state has to do everything possible to help its citizens to read. Thank you. Please do not consolidate these libraries.
- My suggested way to improve local government is to eliminate all townships state wide. In addition, many services could be provided at the county level and not at the city level. Examples of this include: unifying all public schools county wide, unifying all police and fire protection, all property taxes and assessments, etc. Townships have simply outlived their usefulness and are no longer needed. If kept, townships should only be used for local schools in the largest counties, such as: Marion and Allen.
- Please do something. I can no longer help a family member live in a decent house that I rent to them because the taxes are so high. We made a big mistake when we moved to Indiana, I have regretted it since we got our first property tax bills. Mergers of towns, counties, school districts among other things will cut the fat off the tax burden placed on us to keep these cronies on the payroll. This is the 21st century, you should bring the needs and the overlapping of services into focus. NOW!
- I wish to express my strong opposition to any local government consolidation that would wrest local control of our libraries from the communities which they serve. I can fully understand the Governor's desire to economize and reform local government but any change that would alter local community control of libraries would be an assault upon a vital and responsive community based institution, our public library. This local library is a community center which is involved with and supported by the members of the community. In the recent past when there was a budget crisis, the community responded with volunteers to support and sustain this active resource for the youth and families of our community. This open and community level access to knowledge and literature is one of the hallmarks of our free and open American society. Any effort that could result in raising barriers and thus impede access at the local level, even in the name of "efficiency and effectiveness" of local government reform, should be vigorously opposed.
- Gentlemen, I believe I am speaking to the fox that was left in charge of guarding the henhouse. The two chairs of this commission are largely the reason Indiana is in this mess regarding property taxes. I feel very strongly as a lifelong Hoosier and business owner that this commission is about smoke and mirrors. Please research the number of evacuees that are escaping the property taxes in New Jersey. You may then get a clear picture of the future of Indiana. As someone once remarked, I am voting with my feet. The property taxes as they are now, have confiscated my wife's and my retirement based upon rental property we have worked hard to acquire over the last 45 years. We cannot now sell them based upon the fear, now floating through the housing market because of the uncertainty of the tax situation. We are also, unable to rent them because of the number of subsidized apartments in our area. These renters usually have a large number of children, and whether they are illegal or not, must be supported by property taxes going to our school levies. How will you and the Governor address this problem, when all of you are in support of illegals and the crime and social costs that they create. We property owners are now paying these costs in the form of never ending and unfair



property tax increases. Chances are nil and none this commission will truly address the problems. Just blow more smoke at the voters for a while and that will take care of the situation. It has stopped the protests in Indianapolis. I for one will be moving my company and relocating to a state that is not as corrupt as Indiana has become. That will solve my problem, yours will never be solved, because you do not really care about the average working taxpayer, as they are forced out of their homes and more join the assisted apartment living. My contempt, rage, and disgust at our state politicians is beyond belief.

- We have to do something about these property taxes. I live in an Indiana county and I pay an awful amount of property taxes and get nothing in return. I still have well water! The residents and myself had to fight the commissioner to get the other half of our road (the part the we live on) chipped and sealed, when the other half of the road is paved. It is just amazing that we pay this much and do not get anything in return. Something has to be done.
- If a person must drive twenty or thirty miles to get a book to read, then only those with a mode of transportation, money to fuel the transportation and time available when the library is open to borrow a book will be able to take advantage of the free books housed there. This is supposed to be a free service, paid for by tax payer dollars. Schools are trying to encourage reading for enjoyment and information. This proposal is nonsense and counters the efforts of teachers and schools. It also limits the patronage to those who can afford the trip. This punishes the poor while making it something only the wealthy can afford to do. This whole idea makes me furious. Thanks Governor, for supporting the right for all to borrow a book, or are you?
- Do not want consolidation or elimination of small town libraries. Libraries in small communities serve as the focal point in many cases to bring different groups together; a common meeting place.
- I am sending you this e-mail because of the plan to Consolidate all of the small and mid-sized libraries around the state. I think I speak for most people when I say gas prices are too high to drive an hour to get there and an hour to get back from where I live to another library just to get a book or study! I would say most people are not happy about this! What ever happened to freedom of speech? As a student at my middle school, I have to do a lot of work on the computer and I have to go to the library to do it. Are you saying that you don't want us to do our homework? Before you would do any of this I would suggest you would at least let the people vote on this situation. Without even taking in the consideration of what the people think about this you go and consolidate the small towns libraries. If our parents are willing to pay the taxes why take away most of the libraries? In conclusion I would like to say that I **STRONGLY DISAGREE** with your decision! Now please take this e-mail into consideration even though it's only one person, one person can make a difference.
- Leave the libraries alone. Instead of restructuring and making a bigger problem by so much consolidation of local government, use the time and effort to figure away to lower property taxes and help people who don't have health care insurance to obtain insurance. We have so many other problems then consolidating libraries to worry about. Gov. Mitch Daniels isn't looking out for his constituencies when he hasn't found solutions for all the harder issues. Our library is well run and doesn't need to have any changes made. I am sure there are others as well. So please stay out of that area.
- I am writing to voice my appreciation of our library . I am a frequent borrower of books and am thankful that we have easy access to a public library. Our library has been very helpful locating hard to find books through the inter-library loan service. I hope that many people are voicing the importance of keeping the public library in our small town.



The library is a vital part of our town and we need to make sure it stays in my town. I know it is important to streamline government and reduce spending, but my public library should not be sacrificed for the sake of saving money. Thank you for reading my viewpoint while you consider what will happen to the public libraries in Indiana.

- In my county we have the following layers of government: four (4) health depts., six (6) library systems, thirteen (13) 911 call centers, eleven (11) township governments, too many municipal offices of consisting of engineering, building inspectors, planning, clerk treasurer, public works departments, etc., too many (20+) school districts, and County Government to name a few. There are too many layers of local, township, and county governments. A cost benefit analyses must be done to determine which services should be public or private. Departments should be combined to eliminate duplication of services and personnel. Cross training of employees is needed. When communities fight over a new Krispy Kream donut business, something has gone wrong.
- My property taxes are too high. Property taxes are administered unfairly.
- Reduce government spending by: 1) Reduce the number of tax abatements granted. 2) Manage county employees like a private business would manage their's. For example, I saw two highway trucks out together with six men picking up road kill. All it would take is one pick up truck and one man and a shovel. 3) Cut staff members and political patronage jobs. 4) Do away with all government take-home cars. 5) Cut the number of paid holidays to the same number as private business. 6. Don't keep outspending means. USE COMMON SENSE.