



Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform Summary of Public Input: November 15 through November 30

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 November 15 and November 30, 2007. Comments specifically about property taxes have been forwarded to the Commission on State Tax and Financing Policy.

- What better way to support community spirit and participation than to leave institutions such as our excellent library under the greatest measure of local control!
- Any county with a population over 100,000 should be consolidated by the next general election as a city-county government under the county seat with county councils absorbed into the seat's city council and the commissioners absorbed into the office of the mayor. The sheriff should remain as an elected position, overseeing all public safety/emergency response (police, fire, disaster response, homeland security). Lake County needs to be consolidated under Merrillville or Gary. The current structure of Lake County is a disaster in that land-locked urban islands are competing with each other for limited resources instead of working together as one unit - which they are. It should be one city with different neighborhoods - or boroughs, if you like. This could transform one of Indiana's greatest liabilities into its biggest success story and serve as a model for other challenged urban areas. Don't let this area of the state further turn into another Detroit. No county should have fewer than 25,000 people. No school district should serve a population of fewer than 25,000. Allen County should be consolidated under one government. The current system is a shambles and wastes money. This should be done with one of two options: 1) strict zoning to protect the rural/Amish portions of the county from urbanization, or 2) allow current townships in the extreme eastern portion of the county to secede from Allen and become incorporated into either DeKalb or Adams counties. There is no reason that the extreme rural areas - less than 10% of the population of this county should be able to force the majority of Allen County to live with inefficient government and higher taxes.
- I am so pleased Governor Daniels is moving ahead with property tax reform. While a cap on property tax is great, I hope there is also some limit placed on local government spending. I am afraid they will just raise other taxes and not be more prudent with our finances. I also strongly support new capital projects having to go to the voting booth. Our local officials are out of control and no one is doing much to attract jobs here. Indiana is getting plenty of jobs so it has to be something about the city business climate.
- I live in a small town. I go to the library all the time and enjoy it. With the price of gas so high now I can not drive to a different one. Kids walk to the library to read, get on the computers to do homework, attend story time, and to watch movies. So I am saying don't shut the libraries in small towns down. You can really learn a lot from all the books.
- It is not too difficult to see that the bulk of my taxes go to the school system and the school is undergoing a \$14 million renovation project which will further increase my school tax in 2009. I do not believe that changing our system of local county government will have much impact on our taxes. However, I am convinced that the schools need more oversight. We have three school districts in our county, each have their own board and taxing authority. This causes an unequal taxing of our citizens. `



- WE NEED TO KEEP OUR LIBRARY.
- PLEASE DO NOT TAKE AWAY OUR LIBRARY!
- Please consider the people in the small communities in your decision-making regarding libraries. I also hope we don't go back to the days of mobile book vans!
- We take pride in our small library and enjoy it very much. It truly would be devastating to lose. I respectfully urge you to reconsider your decision. We and the children love the library. Please help us keep it.
- I am a Title I reading assistant. I would like to see our town library stay open. It is a wonderful local resource for our school and families. Please reconsider its possible closing.
- I urge you to consider the effect of any property tax reform on hard-working low income Hoosiers. Many proposed suggestions, such as increased sales and/or income tax would have a substantially greater negative impact on the poor, who spend a larger percentage of their meager income on goods which may be subject to sales tax. We respectfully request that you consider two possibilities to help low and moderate income working Hoosiers. The first is a state Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit and the second is increasing the state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) from 6% of the federal to at least 10%.
- Governor Daniels, you need to do something about the Indiana Medicaid System as soon as possible.
- We do not support library consolidation as proposed. We have enjoyed a wonderful, cost-effective library system without political patronage and want it to remain local.
- "The Governor also reacted to Thursday's call for an elimination of the property tax by saying that it's not possible." WANT TO BET?
- As far as I can tell there would be no good to come for our community if consolidation occurs.
- The consolidation of public libraries is not in the best interest of the citizens. Our township library is located two blocks from the schools. Considering the large number of working parents, it is practical for a student to go to the library after school and be picked up by a parent on their way home from work.
- Please reconsider the closing of our town's library.
- Reform does not have to happen at the township level, but at the county level. County Commissioners should be eliminated and replaced with a hired director. This would be less political and cheaper. Reduction does not need to occur at the township level because of the low numbers.
- Please do not close my library. It would force me to travel 25 minutes to the main branch which is too crowded
- My most important observation from my experience is that new schools include too many unnecessary frills. A related one is the significant square footage provided for questionable use, which incurs significant yearly costs for heat, maintenance, etc. My proposal to you: Requiring all bond issues be approved by referendum would reduce costs and taxes in local government in at least two ways: first, the elimination of unnecessary projects; and second, the designers of proposed projects would know their designs would be given close scrutiny by the taxpayers, and they would be motivated to eliminate frivolous additions before they are made. I think prohibiting teachers from participating in politics is a wonderful idea, but have no idea how that could be done today. My second relevant experience: Unions work well for the public good in the private economic sector due to the economically competitive pressure on both sides, but there isn't the needed competitive pressure in union agreements in the public sector. Public sector settlements are less restrained to concessions to the labor side.



Therefore, 1. All unionized public work ought to be questioned for possible privatization where competitive contracts are frequently put out to bid. 2. An unbiased study ought to be started concerning public employee unionization; hopefully conducted by capable people who have no economic or personal interest in the issue. They should look at the obvious factors and some not so obvious. For example: What do other states do, both their general approach, and specifics? What does Indiana do? What is possible? The purpose of this study would be to see if the playing field could be leveled. 3. Introduce competition into the school systems to renew the focus on the students' interests. Widely adopt the best of the current alternatives to allow parents to choose the school they want to have their children attend, either public or private, with their school system paying for it. Vastly expand the current efforts to do this.

- I am disappointed in the Governor's solution in not allowing enough exemptions NOW when investors need it. If we could do away with property tax all together it would be a banner year for Indiana. The trending method is a joke. Some taxes are not out yet. Please exempt rental properties. I'm sorry I ever moved to Indiana.
- I am unhappy with the state's budget for Family and Children's services.
- I realize that the doors of these smaller libraries may close and I fear of losing my job. If this happens, I want to know if I get to transfer or should I find another job? Are you or someone going to find me transportation and pay my bills until I find another job? I strongly plea, please do not close the library doors.
- Now, therefore, the Town Council adopted this Resolution supporting the continued independence of the Public Library and opposing any attempt to diminish its role as a valued institution as would surely result from any consolidation and a loss of local control.
- The local library system seems to be an exception to the need to restructure.
- 1. Local government should not spend more money than they have, period. 2. Do away with mayors in all towns less than 100,000 population. Let the town council run the cities. 3. Do away with most of the schools that have their own superintendants. Provide a county office that serves all the county schools. 4. Elect one County Commissioner and let the elected County Council run the county affairs. 5. Combine all county Parks and Highway superintendants as one job. 6. Property taxes should be appraised at the true value with no exceptions. 7. There are too many government employees. We need to address all of them. 8. When a person runs for public office they should not spend more than the annual salary for that office. 9. We should readdress retired elected officials benefits, especially health Insurance. We just cannot continue to support huge costs for our retired officials. 10. Our elected officials need to be more conscious of spending the taxpayer's money. The taxpayer is running out of money to support so many government employees and so many give-aways.
- The teacher's union has lobbyists' galore, but the small "landlords" have none. The education system needs to cut costs. It has dipped into tax base so much, we are upside down and we need tax relief on investment property. In the *Courier Journal* on November 28th the teachers' association leaders said the sales and income taxes are more susceptible to recession. The trending figures the state is using to establish property values are from 2005. Now we are in a slowdown and values are on the down slide so we are being taxed unfairly on any property. Property is definitely affected by recession!
- Although we have technological advances, it is still necessary to conduct governmental business in person. Township officials are the only elected officials that provide the service of "face-to-face" meetings. Township government is closest to the people and is



also the most efficient. If your goal is to reform government, you should implement ways to assign more responsibility to township government.

- Please to not force libraries to consolidate. They are at the heart of the local community. They have been created by community support. Each is unique. If you take away our local libraries to take away the soul of a community who supports the services and programs developed for local interests. Libraries are a minute part of a property tax bill.