



**Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform**

# Streamlining Local Government

*We've got to stop governing like this*



CENTER FOR URBAN POLICY  
AND THE ENVIRONMENT



**INDIANA UNIVERSITY**

December 11, 2007

Version 1.0

## Recommendations, stated briefly

Commission members agreed unanimously on 27 specific recommendations, believing strongly in each one. In concert and quickly implemented, they will achieve their intended aim. Taken piecemeal or prolonged, we'll be doing this again many years—and many dollars—from now.

**Counties:** Create a clearer, more accountable structure with fewer elected officials. Better coordinate public safety services.

1. Establish a single-person elected county chief executive.
2. Establish a single, unified legislative body for county government. Expand legislative membership to ensure sufficient representation for included rural, suburban and urban populations.
3. Transfer the responsibility for administering the duties of the county auditor, treasurer, recorder, assessor, surveyor, sheriff and coroner to the county executive. Transfer the varied duties of the clerk to the courts, to the county election board and to the county executive. Establish objective minimum professional qualifications and standards for certain county administrative functions.
4. Retain a local government role for property tax assessment under a county assessor who is required to meet professional qualifications and appointed by the county executive.
5. Create a countywide body to oversee the provision of all public safety services.
6. Consolidate emergency public safety dispatch by county or multi-county region. Require that new, local emergency communications systems be compatible with the Project Hoosier SAFE-T statewide 800 MHz communications system.
7. Transfer the responsibility for all funding of the state's trial court system to the state, including public defenders and probation.
8. Move the funding of child welfare from counties to the state.

**Townships:** Transfer all present responsibilities to the county executive.

9. Transfer the responsibility for administering the duties of township government for assessment, poor relief, fire protection, emergency medical services (EMS), cemeteries and any other remaining responsibilities to the county executive. Establish a countywide poor relief levy.
10. Transfer the responsibilities of the township small claims courts in Marion County to superior courts.

**Schools:** Establish districts that are large enough to provide high-caliber education at a lower cost and enhance fiscal accountability.

11. Reorganize school districts to achieve a minimum student population of 2,000. Establish state standards and a county-based planning process similar to that established in 1959 legislation.
12. Require that school corporation bonds be approved by the fiscal body of the municipal or county government containing the greatest proportion of assessed value in the school district.
13. Prompt joint purchasing by schools.
14. Conduct all non-partisan school elections during November in even years.

**Cities and Towns:** Strengthen accountability of elected officials, and eliminate the costs of separate elections.

15. Allow the city council to appoint the city clerk in second-class cities.
16. Move all municipal elections to an even-year cycle.
17. Transfer the responsibilities of municipal health departments to the county health department.

**Libraries and Special Districts:** Establish library districts that are large enough to provide high-caliber services to every Hoosier at a lower cost, and improve fiscal accountability.

18. Reorganize library systems by county and provide permanent library service for all citizens.
19. Require that the budgets and bonds of library and all other special districts be approved by the fiscal body of the municipal or county government containing the greatest proportion of assessed value in the unit seeking approval.
20. Strengthen the current joint purchasing infrastructure for libraries.

**All Local Governments:** Encourage additional voluntary action to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

21. Expand voluntary coordination and consolidation of units and services. Strengthen the power of voters to compel consolidation.
22. Allow local governments to establish service districts with differentiated levels of service and corresponding tax rates.

23. Facilitate local improvement efforts using best management and business practices. Strengthen state mechanisms that support these activities, particularly for collective purchasing.
24. Prohibit employees of a local government unit from serving as elected officials within the same local government unit.

**Support and Monitoring:** Facilitate the implementation of these recommendations.

25. Assign the Indiana Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations to monitor progress toward these recommendations and conduct additional research as needed. Produce an annual report on progress through 2011.
26. Establish a statewide benchmarking system to provide the public and policy-makers with current information about local government productivity and progress.
27. Designate a state office to provide technical assistance to local government.