



County Commissioners Association of Ohio

Maintaining & Advancing the Partnership 2011-2012 Legislative Priorities

County and state government are partners in delivering vital services to Ohioans. Counties are the agent of the state to deliver health and human services programs, serve justice and prosecute criminals, improve infrastructure, manage the property tax system, and foster job creation.

The challenge is how to maintain and advance the partnership given the state budget deficit and the significant reliance of counties on state revenues. While the need for stable state financial assistance to counties continues to be a centerpiece of county legislative initiatives, the realities of the state budget require a new approach and a new emphasis.

This legislative program thus looks at ways the Kasich Administration and the General Assembly can eliminate unfunded mandates; provide administrative flexibility and remove bureaucratic roadblocks that hinder common sense problem solving; empower county commissioners to generate additional revenue locally; and, institute management improvements to help county commissioners better manage county budgets.

Yet this legislative program goes even further by exploring basic structural changes in the way county government operates and in the way it interacts with other county elected officials, respected members of the judiciary and other local governments. How we can make counties work better for the taxpayer and reduce costs and improve efficiency is a recurring central theme.

None of this will be easy. Many of our proposals will be opposed by other elected officials, judges, and other interests who like the status quo. Change is difficult, uncomfortable and threatening. Yet, CCAO believes we must embrace change for the good of all Ohioans.



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Serving Ohio Counties Since 1880

Legislative Priorities

ECONOMIC & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Economic development programs must be customer focused, customer driven, and built collaboratively at the local level. Such initiatives should focus on employers as the customer of state/local coordinated assistance and must reduce the cost of doing business.

PRESERVATION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUND & REPLACEMENT OF TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX REVENUE

The Local Government Fund (LGF) is the single most important element of state assistance to counties. The LGF formula must be retained as a fair approach to sharing revenue that is responsive to economic cycles.

CCAO supports the unfinished business of tax reform by providing a long-term replacement for local revenues lost due to the elimination of the tangible personal property tax. The loss of revenue to county general funds and levy funded agencies is \$273M.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

While an independent judiciary is a hallmark of our government, counties shouldn't subsidize it. Counties are obligated to fund the courts' budget requests yet have no authority to manage court operations. Therefore, as with indigent defense, the state should move towards full responsibility for the operation and management of common pleas courts.

The state also should undertake a restructuring of the misdemeanor court system and unify the probation system. Finally, as the state seeks to reduce its prison population, funding must be directed to support community corrections programs.

PROVISION OF CORE HUMAN SERVICES & EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION

Adequately fund the core safety net including Food Assistance, Medicaid, Ohio Works First, adult protective services, child welfare, child support, and child care as vital to maintain supports to keep people working and for those unable to work. Support management efficiency initiatives, automation strategies, and shared service models while stressing that adequate county administrative funding is essential in times of expanding caseloads.

SHARED SERVICES

CCAO seeks the ability for a board of county commissioners to require other county offices to use centralized services for purchasing, printing, human resource functions, electronic networks and phones, as well as mail functions.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT REFORMS

CCAO supports efforts to re-examine the structure of county government and explore ways to consolidate services and operations to gain efficiencies. In addition, CCAO seeks specific authority to share, combine, or reorganize structure and service delivery models within and across county boundaries.

COUNTY REVENUES & BUDGET CONTROL

Provide broad county revenue flexibility; adjust user fees established by state law and provide county flexibility for other user fees; repeal, modify or provide state funding or revenue source for unfunded mandates; give commissioners enhanced management control over all county budgets; and, allow commissioners to allocate general fund costs to special funds and to access special funds during periods of fiscal stress.

ELECTIONS ADMINISTRATION

Oppose unfunded mandates and address the growing cost of administration resulting from recent reforms.

EMERGENCY 9-1-1 FUNDING & MANAGEMENT

The current 28 cent monthly charge on wireless phones for wireless 9-1-1 service expires at the end of 2012. In its place a permanent state-wide uniform monthly charge against all phones should be enacted to help finance the operation of E-9-1-1 centers; the acquisition of the necessary upgrades; system maintenance; and a reserve fund for technology advances. E-9-1-1 centers should be consolidated at a single PSAP location within a county or region managed as a commissioners' department.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS ON TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Counties need additional resources to address new infrastructure demands of rural and urban areas. Developers need to notify county officials of major developments impacting roads and should collaborate in assuming shared maintenance responsibility. CCAO also supports new local tools like transportation innovation authorities to help with multi-modal projects that create jobs.