



County Commissioners Association of Ohio

Challenges & Choices: Counties at the Crossroads 2013-2014 Legislative Priorities

County and state governments are partners in delivering vital services to Ohioans. Counties are the agent of the state to deliver health and human services programs; administer justice and prosecute criminals; improve infrastructure; manage the property tax system; and foster job creation. Below are the County Commissioners Association of Ohio's (CCAO's) Legislative Priorities.

ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR COUNTY SERVICES & MANDATED FUNCTIONS

For counties to perform mandates and services taxpayers expect, county budgets must be stabilized. Restoration of disproportionate cuts to the Local Government Fund (LGF) and Tangible Personal Property Reimbursements is warranted given the economic recovery. CCAO opposes cost-shifting state responsibilities to counties and reallocating LGF revenue from counties to other political subdivisions because counties receive casino revenue as contrary to constitutional intent.

ADDRESS THE CHALLENGE OF ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

State reforms and unfunded mandates have increased election costs at a time of strained county budgets. Unless costs are contained, and given the unique power of local boards of elections to seek judicial orders for funding, CCAO recommends elections administration and funding become a state responsibility.

REALIGN PUBLIC DEFENDER SYSTEM

Constitutionally mandated indigent defense services should become a state responsibility over time. In the interim, the state should restore 50% funding as originally committed. CCAO supports changes to certain criminal sanctions to reduce the cost and improve administration of the indigent defense system.

OVERSIGHT OF TAXPAYER DOLLARS

In order to manage county budgets on behalf of taxpayers, current authority to court order appropriations for salary increases should be repealed. Boards of elections, courts, prosecutors, and veteran service commissions currently possess this extraordinary power which violates the principle of checks and balances.

IMPROVE COUNTY BUDGET ACCOUNTABILITY

Commissioners must be given enhanced management control and oversight of the county budget. Authority should be granted to adjust user fees to support county services; allocate general fund costs to special funds; have access to special funds when fund balances are high and during periods of fiscal stress; and charge other political subdivisions on a cost allocation methodology, for all mandatory services provided by the county, including but not limited to services provided by the county engineer, sheriff, and prosecutor.

MAINTAIN LOCAL RESPONSIVENESS TO HUMAN NEED IN WORKFORCE & HEALTH TRANSFORMATION

CCAO supports efforts to improve and transform current workforce and health care systems. Counties must be adequately funded to provide core services to address human need and be responsive to business, particularly to help Ohioans during periods of temporary unemployment. Counties are best suited to determine the most effective programming to meet the challenges of its residents and need sufficient technical assistance and state funding to be successful.

AUTHORIZE COUNTY GOVERNMENT STRUCTURAL REFORMS

CCAO supports efforts to re-examine the traditional structure of county government and explore ways to consolidate services and operations to gain efficiencies. In addition, CCAO seeks specific authority to eliminate the office of elected coroner when operations for such office have been regionalized, and to provide authority for voters to eliminate or combine county elected offices as an alternative to a charter.

PROMOTE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT

CCAO supports state policies to encourage the development of new energy sources which offer significant economic opportunities to Ohio. Energy development must responsibly address expensive, vital infrastructure; environmental safeguards; community needs; and financial impacts on local governments.

CHANGES TO OHIO'S SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT LAW

Changes to Ohio's solid waste management law need to recognize the importance of local public oversight of this service needed by all Ohio citizens and business. CCAO supports initiatives to maximize the use of waste as a resource through financially sustainable policies, programs, and facilities that promote public health, safety, and general welfare. In addition, CCAO supports public/private solid waste management partnerships.

EXPAND SHARED SERVICES OPPORTUNITIES

While shared services cannot provide the total answer to offset revenue reductions, enhanced collaboration and shared services need to be promoted to achieve long term efficiencies. CCAO seeks additional authority for boards of county commissioners to require other county offices to use centralized services for a myriad of functions, including IT, when it makes business sense. Counties also support countywide solutions to emergency communications to achieve better service and cost savings.

CCAO POLICY TEAM



*(back row) – **John Leutz**, Senior Policy Analyst; **Josh Hahn**, Senior Policy Analyst; and **Brad Cole**, Managing Director of Research*

*(front row) – **Cheryl Subler**, Managing Director of Policy; **Larry Long**, Executive Director; and **Laura Abu-Absi**, Policy Analyst*

For assistance, please contact the CCAO Policy Team relative to their areas of specialties:

Larry Long

General Government & County Structural Reform

Cheryl Subler

Human Resources, Elections & General Government

Brad Cole

Tax and Finance, Transportation & Solid Waste

John Leutz

Public Safety, Justice & Economic Development

Josh Hahn

Sunshine Law, Agriculture, Energy & Environment

Laura Abu-Absi

Health and Human Services,
Unemployment & Workers Comp

County Commissioners Association of Ohio

209 East State Street

Columbus, OH 43215-4309

614/221-5627 www.ccao.org

Serving Ohio Counties Since 1880