

NEWS RELEASE

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The Northeast Indiana Corporate Council supports plan to streamline local government – Sees Status Quo as Unacceptable

FORT WAYNE, Ind. – The Northeast Indiana Corporate Council supports the principles set forth by a recently released report from the bipartisan Indiana Commission on Local Government Reform entitled “*Streamlining Local Government – We’ve Got to Stop Governing Like This.*” This panel of distinguished Hoosiers, co-chaired by former Governor Joe Kernan and Supreme Court Chief Justice Randall Shepard, also included our own region’s John Stafford from IPFW and retired Lincoln CEO Ian Rolland. The Commission and staff from IU’s Center for Urban Policy and Environmental Affairs heard from hundreds of Indiana citizens and clearly understand our 150-year-old structure of government must change with the times.

The plan for local government reform comes at a critical time when most Hoosiers are feeling the pain of runaway property taxes. Our taxes and the structure of local government are obviously interrelated. The plan’s introduction clearly sets forth the problem: “With more than 3,200 independent local governments, our complex system of boundaries, officeholders and taxing authorities makes it increasingly difficult for citizens to affect local government services or the taxes that pay for them.” Many Hoosiers mistakenly believe we enjoy small, “close to the people” government, when in fact we are burdened by bureaucracy and pay for one of the largest elected governments in the nation – 10,700 elected officials. These elected officials are conscientious people, doing their best to provide the services required of them, but the structure of government gets in the way of being truly efficient or effective.

The status quo is unacceptable for Hoosier families and business...the time to act is now. We already see many units of local government and special interest lobbyists saying, “Not us.” The Corporate Council encourages state legislators to take prompt action to implement the local government reform plan. We cannot afford an 1850s’ system of government nor accept that some proposals, such as eliminating township government or giving voters a say in capital projects, may simply be “politically impossible.” The property tax crisis cannot be solved without risking serious pain to our local units of government, schools and other institutions unless the structure of government and unfunded mandates are changed. The direct consequence to our state’s economy and ability to govern by preserving the status quo of this outdated system is unacceptable if we plan to position Indiana as a competitive and progressive 21st-century state.

About the Northeast Indiana Corporate Council

The Corporate Council has been positively contributing to growth in northeast Indiana since it was founded by a group of Fort Wayne CEOs more than 27 years ago. Today’s Corporate Council is a regional group of 45 CEOs whose mission is to “*promote the common business interests, growth, opportunity, and general economic welfare for businesses in northeastern Indiana.*”

Facilitating regionalism, upgrading workforce skills for 21st-century employment, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and promoting government efficiency and effectiveness are the driving initiatives of the Corporate Council.

For more information about the Northeast Indiana Corporate Council, visit www.neincc.com.

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