



PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

January 31, 2012

Dear Editor:

In a January 17 editorial, titled “Fire Service Clue for State,” the Times-Tribune urges the legislature to “launch a project to rework the municipal classification system in the state to *mandate*...consolidated services.”

You are not the first newspaper to jump on the forced municipal merger bandwagon, and you certainly won’t be the last, but I feel it’s important to once again set the record straight. At the end of the editorial, you espouse the virtues of county government taking over many municipal services. This bigger-is-better approach, you say, will reduce redundancy and save money.

Please, take off your rose-colored glasses and look around the state. Where are the failures? It’s the big governments – places like Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and Scranton – that are in financial distress, not the hundreds of townships in your own back yard. And where is the proof that forced mergers will save money? Sure, reformers like to entice the public with this utopian bait, but no study has ever confirmed these findings. Instead, experts say, the only thing consolidation will do is create another layer of bureaucracy – a bloated, expensive, unaccountable, and unresponsive one at that.

Yes, Pennsylvania has a number of local governments, and we have them for a reason: Pennsylvanians like being able to shape their communities and having a voice in what happens. We can’t get around the fact that Pennsylvania is one of those places where government of the people, by the people, and for the people still exists – nor should we attempt to try. It’s time we take a look at Pennsylvania’s *real* issues – namely, the financial damage that collective bargaining is causing, especially on cities. Because the reality is, the commonwealth does have problems, but local governments aren’t one of them.

Sincerely,

David M. Sanko, Executive Director
Pa. State Association of Township Supervisors