



As noted in the Introduction to this Report, various bills are exempted from the LIS requirement and, consequently, a Local Impact Statement Report inadequately reflects the burden upon county government that is imposed through unfunded mandates and policy decisions of the General Assembly. Primary among those exemptions is the state's biennial budget bill.

In 2011 Ohio was faced with a significant structural imbalance which policy makers were determined to manage without any revenue enhancements or tax increases. It was widely acknowledged that funding cuts to local governments would be part of the solution to the budget crisis. CCAO envisioned the opportunity for real reform to tackle inefficiencies at the county level and effectuate reform that would provide services in a more cost-effective and efficient manner. To that end, throughout the budget process CCAO offered a multitude of ideas aimed at various reforms, sharing services, and "doing things differently." While we appreciate that a number of these proposals were eventually adopted, they constituted the "low hanging fruit." In the end the reform gained did not equate to the sacrifices incurred through the budget process.

Significant provisions contained within H.B. 153, the state biennial budget for fiscal years 2012 and 2013, which are "missed" by this Report include:

- Taking the Local Government Fund "off formula" and making a biennial appropriation to the LGF based upon the State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2011 funding that generally appropriates 75% of that amount to the political subdivisions in SFY 2012 and 50% of that amount in SFY 2013;
- Accelerating the phase-out of reimbursements for lost tangible personal property taxes and public utility tangible property taxes;
- Providing several new exemptions from the sales and use tax that have the practical effect of reducing revenue to the counties that levy a sales tax;
- Reducing the funding to support the administration of the counties' Family and Children First Councils;
- Eliminating DRC Adult Parole Authority staff which had been conducting presentence investigation and report writing for common pleas courts across the state;

- Cutting funding to county agricultural societies that is used to partially reimburse them for their expenses in providing youth activities;
- Increased the audit costs the county must pay to the Auditor of State for performing the audit of county; and
- Continuing to reduce the general revenue funding for indigent defense reimbursement.

Counties are uniquely tied to the state as the provider of state services at the local level on the state's behalf. The vitality and viability of this state/county partnership is directly impacted through all actions of the General Assembly. Therefore, CCAO urges the General Assembly to review all legislation enacted for its impact upon Ohio's local governments through the LIS process. Only then, will the General Assembly and the public receive the true picture of the impacts that unfunded mandates and policy decisions have upon the counties and other local governments.

CCAO thanks the Legislative Service Commission for the opportunity to comment on this Report and wishes to acknowledge the professionalism and extreme competence of the LSC staff. Irrespective of the concerns CCAO raises regarding the LIS process, CCAO has always found the work of LSC to be invaluable and much appreciated.