



May 19, 2007

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Local Government Week Proclaimed

SPRINGFIELD – The legislature proclaimed the first full week in March as "Local Government Week" in Illinois. The Senate adopted the resolution on May 18 with SR0152, while the House of Representatives had adopted the resolution earlier on April 14 with the bill HJR0023.

A coalition of Illinois local government associations and state legislators proposed the designation of "Local Government Week" beginning in March 2008. The drive was announced during a press conference at the Illinois State Capitol on March 6.

State Representative Michael Tryon (R-Crystal Lake) sponsored the resolution to create "Local Government Week."

The proposal was an outgrowth of the Partnership for Local Government Education, a collaboration between the Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners, the Illinois Municipal League, the Township Officials of Illinois, and University of Illinois Extension.

One goal of the Partnership, which provides a curriculum for use in Illinois high school classrooms, is to further the understanding of the role that local government plays in individual lives and collectively.

"These governmental bodies, officials, and appointees provide critical services to the people of Illinois ranging from maintaining roads and bridges to providing fire protection to parks and libraries," said Jeri Marxman, U of I Extension public policy specialist who oversees the local government curriculum now available for Illinois high schools.

"We believe that 'Local Government Week' focuses attention on the need for strong, independent, and active local government," said Kelly Murray, executive director of the Illinois Association of County Board Members and Commissioners.

Bryan Smith, executive director of the Township Officials of Illinois, said creation of Local Government Week will help citizens find services.

"Observing the week each year will allow local officials to showcase the many services and programs provided by local governments," he noted.

B.J. Hackler, president of the St. Joseph Village Board who is also president of the Illinois Municipal League, termed local government "the backbone of our state."

"It is vital that our young people know the role local government plays in our daily lives," he said.

The Partnership plans to observe "Local Government Week" with a series of programs offered throughout Illinois, including:

- development of an interactive video describing the types and functions of local government;
- school visits by elected officials;
- expansion of teacher training;
- placement of local government curriculum updated material online; and
- presentations of possible career/volunteer opportunities in local public service.

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