



Tennessee County Services Association

Representing Tennessee's County Mayors, County Highway Officials, and County Commissioners since 1954

David Seivers
Executive Director

226 Capitol Boulevard, Suite 700, Nashville, Tennessee 37219
Phone: 615/532-3767 Fax: 615/532-3769
Web Site: www.tncounties.org

Pat Mitchell
Executive Secretary

TCSA 2008 Legislative Platform

General Legislative Policy Statement

The Tennessee County Services Association, and its affiliates, the Tennessee Association of County Mayors, Tennessee County Commissioners Association and Tennessee County Highway Officials Association, generally oppose legislation which has the effect of imposing additional unfunded mandates on Tennessee's 95 county governments, or which further erodes the narrow tax base currently available to Tennessee counties. Further, the association and its affiliates will defend against intrusions into the limited local autonomy vested in county governments. TCSA will support the legislative platforms of its affiliates when they promote the mutual missions of all county official associations.

Education Funding

TCSA will continue support of full funding of the Basic Education Program (BEP), including improvements to BEP 2.0 as approved in 2007 by the Governor and the Tennessee General Assembly. We will support an increase in the unit cost for the teacher salary base and completing the restoration of the state share of teachers' salaries back to 75%. We support an increase in the component reimbursement cost for At Risk students. We support an increase in the component cost of the state's share of health insurance for teachers. We support mechanisms like circuit breakers to protect any school system that might be subject to dramatic shifts in revenues brought on by changes in fiscal capacity. We support ways to ensure that already limited local revenue sources are distributed as equitably as possible. TCSA supports excess lottery funds going toward capital construction for Pre K-12 education. We will look for ways to protect local education funding from the effects of any special tax financing for regional industrial prospects and the effect of certain tourist development zones.

Jails and Correctional Facilities

TCSA will continue to support the findings of the TCSA Jail Cost Management Committee. The committee is designed to search for ways to save money and more efficiently and effectively manage and operate county jails. As part of that committee's recommendations, TCSA supports an increase in the "per diem" cost of housing state prisoners in local jails above the current \$35 per day to better reflect actual costs of providing this service to the state. It is hoped that the Administration and General Assembly will further realize that counties are covering the costs of housing state probation violators for an average of 75 days without being compensated for this service local governments are providing to the state. Further, TCSA continues to urge the Administration and General Assembly to develop and authorize new cost saving measures to help reduce the financial burden that counties face in dealing with the cost of housing prisoners, particularly rising inmate medical costs. TCSA encourages the state to provide financial incentives to build regional jails and upgrade/expand existing facilities.

Highway Funding

TCSA and its affiliate organizations, recognizing the importance of local government transportation infrastructure and how it relates to the state's economic and community development success, encourages the Administration and General Assembly to expand funding for the viable State Aid and Bridge Grant Program and redesigning of the Federal Bridge Replacement Program. As the state continues to endure ever-increasing revenue losses from both federal and state sources, the prospects of TDOT's ability to implement the state's 25-Year Long Range Transportation Plan appears to be in jeopardy. The state's long range transportation plan neither recognizes nor includes any improvements or enhancements necessary to support the county transportation system. We support the local transportation system's inclusion in the overall plan. Just like the state, local governments are facing tremendous inflationary cost increases in highway and bridge construction materials, in excess of 25 percent since June 2006, and minimal annual increases in fuel tax collections (1 percent for each of the past three fiscal years). TCSA and its affiliate organizations support a state and local government partnership planning initiative to explore funding solutions along with innovative ideas that will allow our statewide transportation infrastructure and operations to be enhanced. TCSA and its affiliates welcome and applaud the appointment of a joint Senate-House Transportation Study Committee to start the process of identifying the future funding needs of both the state and local governments.

Collective Bargaining

TCSA reaffirms its position in opposition to mandatory collective bargaining. Present law allows counties and cities, if they so desire, to bargain with local government employee unions. TCSA opposes any legislation which would officially recognize a labor organization's ability to enter into enforceable memorandums of understanding with local governments. Such legislation could result in demands by local government unions that would require property tax increases and result in work slowdowns and/or interruptions of essential services.

Environment

TCSA recognizes the increasing burden and responsibility counties are shouldering in regards to protecting our natural environment and balancing the impact economic growth has on our natural resources. Counties are dealing with new regulations and requirements in regards to storm water management and the clean air act while still struggling with long-standing problems such as solid waste management and the disposal of waste tires and household hazardous waste. For these reasons, TCSA encourages the General Assembly to insure that local governments have the resources and funding mechanisms available to meet the demands of establishing new programs to protect environmental resources across our state.

Open Government

TCSA and its affiliates support the work of the open government study committee and its subcommittees and an effort to make government more transparent. We will work with the General Assembly to ensure reasonable improvements are made to enhance the democratic process.

Local Mandates

TCSA continues to support the protection of the tax base of Tennessee county governments. We oppose any proposal that either erodes an already limited tax base or necessitates subsequent local tax increases to implement an unfunded mandate.