

John C. Ackerman

Tazewell County Board

Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service

March 30th, 2011

***** Position Statement *****

Recorder of Deeds Ballot Proposition

On April 5th, 2011, the voters of Tazewell County will find a Proposition on the ballots addressing the idea of abolishing the Record of Deeds Position and reassignment of that office to the County Clerk's Office. It will read:

"Shall the County Recorder of Deeds Office be abolished and its responsibilities assumed by the County Clerk's Office?"

After researching this issue and the ramifications of this action, I will not be supporting this proposition and ask that you join me and my family in voting no.

This proposition came to the County Board from Chairman Zimmerman before all of the information concerning the ramifications, including associated cost was made available. We were asked to discuss and vote on this issue with little to no time to prepare and cast an informed vote. A majority of the members voting that night stated that they did not have enough information to make an educated choice. When it did come up for a vote, after a close vote of 10-8, the issue was passed on to the voters.

Chairman Zimmerman should be congratulated for looking for any opportunity to save the taxpayers of Tazewell County tax money. His efforts were honorable, but this time the evidence has come to show that little would be gained and too much could be lost. Also the execution of this process should have been better, as the proposal first came before the County Board on the same night it needed to be voted on without providing time for in-depth research and consideration. It is also disappointing that after the leadership promised to have public forums to release further information on this subject, not only was there no public forums but we also failed to release further research supporting or disproving the need for this consolidation.

It was quoted at the time that the savings could be as high as 60-80 thousand dollars a year. This estimate came from the removal of the County Recorder of Deeds Official's pay. The cost of the office staff and operations would remain the same, minus the elected official pay.

Items that have come forward since then have shown that while the elected official pay would be saved, a new supervisor's pay would have to be added to supervise the office operations. Also, the County Clerks elected position's pay would most likely be increased in the future because of the added responsibilities and staff.

Finally, it was stated that another reason for consolidation would be to combine the computer operating systems. Currently the County Clerk's Office and the Record of Deeds Office operate on separate systems. This could be done currently if both elected officials saw the need and the County Board provided the funding of such work. To date, the Recorder of Deeds has stated that such a

combination would be a degrade, not an upgrade, of his system. If this was to happen, it would be a very costly effort and at this time the County Board does not have the staffing or funding cost budgeted.

When it is all said and done, the savings by removing the elected position would be spent on a new supervisor's position within the office, increased pay to the County Clerk's elected position, and staffing and time cost from combination of the computer operating system cost.

With no cost savings, all that is left is the removal of an elected office and replacement of that office with an appointed position. This would remove that individual from the control of the citizens. This is too much to sacrifice for no cost savings.

In all of the State of Illinois, it has been pointed out that the vast majority of counties do not have a Recorder of Deeds position. This is because the State Law provides that only counties over 60,000 have the ability to have such an elected position. With that, of the counties that have a population over 60,000, only one does not have a Recorder of Deeds position. Additionally, the current and past Tazewell County Recorder of Deeds has stated their opposition to this proposition.

This issue is very complex and has long-term ramifications on Tazewell County. I am glad that Chairman Zimmerman brought this forward as I feel we must review every opportunity to save the taxpayers' money, but this time the evidence is showing that no financial savings is available. It would not be wise to remove the citizen's ability to hire and fire an elected official and replace it with a politically appointed position, especially when there would be no financial gain.

The citizens of Tazewell County should retain their ability to control the future of this office by joining me and my family in voting no on April 5th.

As always, I consider it an honor and a privilege to serve you on the Tazewell County Board and if I can be of any assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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