

John C. Ackerman

Tazewell County Board

Continuing a Family Tradition of Community Service

September 23rd, 2009

***** Position Update *****

[Time for Tazewell County to Reform with Smaller Districts](#)

Recently, the Illinois State Senate Committee on Redistricting was in Peoria for the third in a series of four hearings across the state concerning the upcoming redistricting that would take place following the 2010 census. This conversation is taking place, before the census is completed, so that an idea of what could happen can be properly vented and thoroughly reviewed. At the local level here in Tazewell County, we are also facing a redistricting process following the 2010 census and now is the time for us to start the review of possible idea's for change.

Currently, Tazewell County has three County Board Member Districts, of which District Three that I represent is the largest in population. Tazewell County District Three has a population larger than 70% of the counties in the State of Illinois. On average, each Tazewell County Board Member represents 42,828 people in his/her district. Compare that to our neighboring counties and it is more than twice the population of the next largest. In fact, in the State of Illinois only four counties have a County Board District population larger than any Tazewell County District; they are Cook, DuPage, Will and McHenry Counties.

What does this mean for Tazewell County? Each County Board Member represents a much larger and more diverse district than our counterparts in the state. In each district, a board member must represent both the urban and rural interest of the communities they represent. It also leads to questions about community representation. The Village of Mackinaw is blessed currently with three County Board Members living close to it, while the second largest city in the county, East Peoria, has only one member who is not seeking re-election in the upcoming 2010 campaign. There is a real possibility that after 2010 East Peoria will not have a board member. The City of Washington, another leading community in population, currently has two board members while the Village of Morton, which is only slightly larger in population, currently has five members.

By reducing the size of these districts and thus increasing the amount of districts, not only could more parts of the county be represented by spreading out the County Board Members but you could also find that members will have less diverse districts and thus would be able to more thoroughly represent the individual interest of his/her constituents.

Now is the time for us to sit down and look at our current districts and ask if we could do better. One possibility could be leaving the number of members the same, 21, but instead of 3 districts with seven members each have seven districts with three members each. If this were done currently, each district would on average represent 18,355, which would be much closer to Peoria County at 10,191 and McLean County at 15,043.

Just as in the case with the State of Illinois, now is the time to sit down and discuss these possibilities so that when the census numbers come out we can proceed with implementation rather than

discussions of theory. 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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