

April 27, 2015

Scott Burnham  
Serafin & Associates  
[scott@serafin.com](mailto:scott@serafin.com)  
(312) 550-3947



## ProtectMyTown.com launches to empower Illinois residents

### *Mayors statewide urge residents to oppose cuts in local funding*

Heading into the final weeks of the General Assembly's legislative session, Illinois mayors and municipal groups throughout Illinois launched a statewide movement today aimed at activating Illinois residents to voice their opposition to proposed state cuts in local revenue.



The new website and social media platform – ProtectMyTown.com – enables Illinoisans to directly engage their state legislators as well as Gov. Bruce Rauner and urge them to resist attempts to use local revenue – the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF) – to fill state budget gaps and shift the tax burden on to local communities and taxpayers.



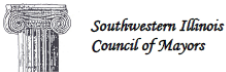
“ProtectMyTown.com serves as a direct communication vehicle that gives residents across the state the ability to make their voices heard on this important issue and understand how it impacts their daily lives,” said Downers Grove Mayor Martin Tully, who serves as President of the DMMC, noting that the proposed reduction would create a loss of more than \$2.4 million, which is equivalent to 20 percent of the Village's total property tax levy. “It only takes 30 seconds to send a note to your state legislators and the Governor to protect these funds.”



After logging on to ProtectMyTown.com, it only takes three easy steps to directly contact your legislator and the Governor: 1) Review your letter; 2) Fill out your information; and 3) Hit the Take Action button to complete the form. Residents can also forward and share the site through Facebook and Twitter, encouraging their friends, family and followers to join the movement as well.



At stake is \$1.2 billion, generated by local residents and collected by the state before being distributed back to municipalities, where it belongs. The LGDF accounts for anywhere between 10 to 15 percent of a municipality's operating budgets and is allocated for essential services, such as police and fire, road repairs and maintenance, garbage collection and snowplowing. Proposals have called for the state to take half of the annual amount, or more than \$600 million.



“Most Illinois residents have no idea the role that the Local Government Distributive Fund plays, but reducing our local share would result in significant local budget holes, ensuring that taxpayers pay more and get less in return,” said Evanston Mayor and Northwest Municipal Conference President Elizabeth Tisdahl, arguing the LGDF reduction would create a loss of more than \$3.7 million, which is equivalent to 9.5 percent of the city's total property tax levy in Evanston. “Cutting our revenue will not solve the problem but will just merely pass the financial burden directly onto our residents.”



“If the LGDF is reduced by 50 percent, local governments will be forced to make up the difference by cutting front-line services, raising property taxes, delaying needed projects and repairs, or laying off workers, including police officers and firefighters,” said Aurora Mayor Tom Weisner, noting that the proposed reduction would result in a \$9.8 million loss, or about \$50 per resident. “That's why it's critical that local residents understand the implications of the proposed cuts.”

- DuPage Mayors and Managers Conference
- McHenry County Council of Governments
- Metro West Council of Government
- Northwest Municipal Conference
- Southwest Conference of Mayors
- South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association
- Southwestern Illinois Council of Mayors
- Will County Governmental League

Protect My Town is a coordinated effort between local councils of government, including DuPage Mayors & Managers, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Northwest Municipal Conference, McHenry County Council of Governments, Metro West Council of Governments, Southwest Conference of Mayors, South Suburban Mayors & Managers Association, Southwestern Illinois Council of Mayors, and the Will County Governmental League. The mayors and municipal groups are also working closely with the Illinois Municipal League and its efforts to preserve LGDF cuts statewide.

“It’s important that residents act and reach out to their lawmakers because cities and villages throughout the state are at a crossroads,” said Gerald Bennett, Mayor of Palos Hills, adding that the proposed cuts would eliminate \$900,000 or 12 percent of the overall operating budget. “The decisions made in Springfield in the next few weeks will have an effect on the future of local government and the functions and services it can provide for its citizens.”

Illinois mayors, who balance their budgets every year, continue to struggle from skyrocketing pension costs, the impacts of the Great Recession and the loss of revenue resulting from the temporary income tax hike imposed in 2011, which resulted in the state keeping every additional dollar that it generated

“Municipalities have made tough decisions that were in the best interest of their residents,” said Frankfort Mayor Jim Holland, adding the loss of LGDF funds would amount to \$866,000 or 7 percent of the village’s operating fund, which pays for seven of the village’s 29 police officers. “The state of Illinois needs to tackle the problem by increasing efficiency, paying their bills responsibly, and aligning expenses with actual revenue without passing the problem on to other levels of government serving the same constituents.”

The mayors have applauded Gov. Rauner for pledging to “free” municipalities from costly unfunded mandates during February’s State of the State Address. However, the total cost of the 280 unfunded mandates comes nowhere near the more than \$600 million in LGDF revenue, which the governor is proposing to eliminate from those communities and that municipalities rely upon to fund and provide basic services, programs and staff.

“Having struggled during these difficult economic times to balance budgets by living within their means, cutting and privatizing services and doing more with much less, cities and villages cannot afford to take on more of the burden” said Lynwood Mayor Eugene Williams, noting that the south suburbs have struggled with disproportionately high property taxes for years. In Lynwood, the cut would mean \$459,000 for a population of 9,000 residents.

In addition, non-home rule communities, or those towns with fewer than 25,000 residents, face more urgent needs as state law prohibits them from raising property taxes without a referendum.

“We’ve tightened our belts and cut to the bone but we’re continuing to rapidly lose ground,” said Roselle Village President Gayle Smolinski, adding that the loss of LGDF revenue would amount to more than \$1.1 million or about 22 percent of their tax levy. “We have to choose between funding retiree benefits and providing for the health, welfare and safety of our residents.”

Illinois municipalities rely on the Local Government Distributive Fund (LGDF), which was instituted in 1969 in exchange for cities and towns not imposing their own income tax. It guarantees municipalities a share of state income tax receipts to help fund local services.