

## Wisconsin Towns Association 2009-2010 Legislative Agenda

1258 town governments in Wisconsin provide general government services to 1,695,776 residents (30.4% of total state population). 95% of the land area in Wisconsin is within towns. Towns maintain 61,780 miles of town highways. Town government in Wisconsin is efficient and cost effective in the delivery of the full range of services from highways; to fire, police, and ambulance service; to tax assessment, billing, and collecting; to conducting elections; to providing solid waste and recycling services; to providing sewer and water; plus a wide range of other services. **Wisconsin Towns Association (WTA) believes that to continue the efficient delivery of services towns must be able to retain local control and be allowed the flexibility to provide these services as determined by each town for their citizens and property owners.** Therefore, WTA supports the following legislative issues in the 2009-2010 Legislative Session:

### Boundary Issues

Town government should have greater authority to plan for the future of their community and promote economic development within their town. Current annexation laws and extraterritorial powers of cities and villages deprive towns from being a greater economic force in Wisconsin.

Therefore, WTA: (1) supports legislative changes to the extraterritorial plat authority of cities and villages as granted by the Supreme Court decision of *Wood v. City of Madison*, by requiring cities and villages to be able to exercise such extraterritorial platting authority only with the agreement and approval of the town; (2) supports legislative changes to give legal standing to towns to challenge unanimous direct annexations under Sec. 66.0217 (2) & (11) as to whether such an annexation is contiguous as required by law; and (3) supports the enactment of legislation which will give all Wisconsin towns the same general government, land use and police powers as villages and cities.

### Transportation Issues

Towns maintain 61,780 miles (approx. 55%) of the total highway system in Wisconsin. The financial needs of towns and all local government to maintain local highways, including town highways, continues to increase, while the state aids for local transportation have failed to keep up with these increased needs.

Therefore WTA: (1) supports the passage of a constitutional amendment to limit the transfer of transportation funds to the general purpose budget; (2) supports an increase in gas tax of 3 cents/gallon plus the recreation of motor fuel tax indexing, if a proportionate share is provided for local highways aids; and (3) supports the creation of regional transportation authorities if local governments are allowed to "opt in" by action of the governing body with a right of referendum or town meeting vote in each municipality.

### Land Use and Preserving Working Lands

Town government should have the authority to both plan and regulate land uses within their boundaries. With 95% of the total land area in towns, the preservation of working lands should be primarily governed at the town level.

Therefore WTA: (1) supports legislation to delay of the consistency requirement under the comprehensive planning law (Sec. 66.1001 (3) of Wis. Stat.) to January 1, 2012 if the town, village, city, or county adopts a resolution to commit to planning and completing a comprehensive plan by the extension date of January 1, 2012; (2) supports modification of Sec. 59.69 (3)(b) of Wis. Stat. to provide that a county development plan does not have to include a city or village master plan or official map covering a town that has adopted its own comprehensive plan; and (3) supports the "Working Lands Initiative" to preserve both agricultural and forest land through financial incentives and comprehensive planning at the town level.

### Levy Limits

Town and village governments face increasing costs and demands for increasing services. In all towns the town taxpayers have the ultimate authority to establish the town tax levy through a town meeting vote.

Therefore WTA: (1) supports the repeal of local levy limits or in the alternative increasing flexibility for all local units of government; and (2) supports legislation to give towns over 2,000 in population in lieu of the referendum requirement the same approval process to exceed the levy limits as towns under 2,000 in population by town meeting vote upon appropriate notice to the electors.