

## ***County Commissioners Association of Ohio***

The 1999 Local Impact Statement (LIS) Summary prepared by the Legislative Budget Office (LBO) shows that impact of unfounded mandated on county government. It again shows that counties are impacted more than other local units of government in the State of Ohio.

Any member of the General Assembly who wonder why County Commissioners and the CCAO staff are often found “rambling” through the corridors of the Statehouse complaining about unfounded mandates need only review and think about this report.

The data in the report speaks for itself. During 1999 a total of twenty-two bills became law that had a fiscal impact on local governments. Of this total, twenty-one (95%) impacted counties. Compare this with other political subdivisions. Of the 22 bills, 18 (82%) had an impact on municipalities, eight (36%) affected townships, and three (14%) related to local school districts. The data itself shows why counties continue to lobby the General Assembly to reduce the inclination to pass on mandates without funding.

A further analysis of the twenty-one bills that impacted counties give additional insight in to the nature of legislation that either requires counties to increase expenditures or reduces revenues needed to fund previous mandates. Of the twenty-one bills that had a fiscal impact on counties, nearly half (48%) addressed court and criminal justice issues, while 38% made changes in tax laws that reduced country revenue.

This data again shows why, in many counties, the cost of courts and criminal justice gobble up over 60% of general fund revenues. The trend of increasing cost on counties as a result of tougher sentencing laws and procedural changes in the criminal justice system has been show in this report in previous years. While it is difficult to argue that some of the changes to sentencing and other criminal justices laws makes sense and are popular, most of the costs associated with these changes are paid for with county, not state, dollars.

Hopefully the 124<sup>th</sup> General Assembly will better understand the fiscal impact of the changes to the criminal justice system and provide needed subsidies to assist counties to pay for the laws the Legislature tells counties to implement.

## ***County Commissioners Association of Ohio*** **(Conclusion)**

The 1999 data raise interesting questions. While the 1999 data prevent LBO from drawing conclusions as to the cause and effect relationship between a bill's local impact determination and whether or not it is enacted, the data do show that a bill's local impact is correlated with its eventual disposition. This result provides some support for the idea that local impact determinations may impact the chances that a particular piece of legislation will be enacted.

Future examinations of enacted legislation may serve to strengthen or weaken the observations made in this report. However, one thing is certain: local impact statements have provided information important to decision making about local government effects. Moreover, whenever a bill is changed in committee, the local impact statement must be revised and provided to the committee before it votes out the bill, unless it does so by a two-thirds margin. Even with a two-thirds vote, a revised LIS is generally desired. With members of the General Assembly having access to more information on which to base decisions, it is clear that local impact statements do *impact* the legislative process.