



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF OHIO

Unfortunately the 2006 Local Impact Statement Report inadequately represents the burden of unfunded mandates placed upon county government by the General Assembly during 2006.

Unfunded mandates continue to plague all units of local government. Their impact becomes more severe, however, when coupled with the current economic climate. The demands for county government service, most of which the county delivers on the state's behalf, continue to increase while revenue sources for county governments have stagnated or declined. Unfunded mandates continue to erode the foundation of a viable state/county partnership-county fiscal security.

Compliance with the federal Help America Vote Act is of major concern for county governments. Yet HB 3, which made significant changes to Ohio's election process, most of which impacted the counties' administration of elections, is not addressed in this report. The new responsibilities imposed by HB 3 on our county boards of elections were not accompanied by adequate funding and, thus, our counties will bear significant new costs associated with the implement and continued administration of these responsibilities.

The Local Impact Statement process also does not give a comprehensive and accurate view of unfunded mandates from the perspective of counties because the General Assembly has exempted budget bills from the LIS process and, thus, this Report.

CCAO feels that the General Assembly would do itself a greater service and bring to itself a greater awareness of how their decisions have financial implications to counties and other local governments by eliminating the current provisions which exempt certain legislation from the LIS process. A review of all legislation enacted for its impact upon Ohio's local governments would be more appropriate. Only then, will the General Assembly and the public receive the true picture of the impacts of unfunded mandates on local governments.

Irrespective of the concerns CCAO raises regarding the LIS process, we wish to acknowledge the professionalism and extreme competence of the LSC staff. We have always found the work of LSC to be fair and objective even under what is often challenging circumstances. CCAO wishes to thank the Legislative Service Commission for the opportunity to comment on this report.