



## From Your Executive Director

There's never been a more important time ... thank you

**T**HE FIRST FEW DAYS of February saw Old Man Winter stomp all over the State of Illinois. As the snow flew fast and furious, words such as "Snowmageddon" seemed to be all over the news media reporting on this huge winter storm.

While I knew a lot of things came to an abrupt halt due to the weather, one thing did not—township highway commissioners. In fact, as Old Man Winter was preparing to dump, in some places, more than 18 inches of snow, township highway commissioners all over the state were preparing their "battle plans" for this winter attack.

However, just a few days later on Feb. 9, a new "attack" came. On that date, Senate Bill 1811 was introduced by Senator Michael Noland, 22nd District, Elgin. This bill would abolish all township road districts with less than 100 miles of road. According to our records, this would leave only eight township road districts in the state! Introducing a bill like this on the heels of one of our biggest snowfalls in recent history, where township road commissioners worked heroically to keep roads open and passable for their residents, just didn't make sense.

TOI Legislative Consultant Tim Bramlet talked with Sen. Noland after he had introduced the bill and the Senator replied he had "nothing against township government", he just feels there is "too much duplication in government." To me, it didn't make a lot of sense but I did send out alerts to all highway commissioners making them aware of the bill. Just as I expected, the response was simply overwhelming. Legislators were calling, some even stopping Tim in the Capitol and letting him know they were hearing from our members. Everyone calling was letting their legislators know what they do in their townships and how vital it is. This was definitely a call to arms!

Several highway commissioners copied me on information they shared with legislators and I think

several of them are definitely worth sharing.

Charlie Montgomery from Monticello Township in Piatt County e-mailed the Senate Local Government Committee, where the bill was assigned, the following message: "As your Monticello Township Highway

Department staff started plowing snow at 3:30 a.m. this morning on our rural township roads, maintaining and keeping them safe and open for travel for our township's constituents and schools, I cannot emphasize enough the importance I

feel of keeping our oldest and closest to its constituents form of highway maintenance system with less

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than 100 miles in the state of Illinois in existence.”

Kim Kiesgen from Grant Township in Lake County sent committee members an excellent letter detailing all the things township road districts do. She also stated that “it is arguable that the Highway Commissioner is the township ‘ambassador of goodwill’ because when roads are clean and safe, constituents are satisfied.”

Chris Filbert from Cordova Township in Rock Island County and also a TOI Board member, shared the story with us of trying to clear 18 inches of snow with the help of a volunteer farmer who loaned the use of his endloader to help clear the 6-8 ft. drifts. She also communicated that to her legislators too. She very appropriately said “That’s what a community is supposed to do ... work together in times of emergency.”

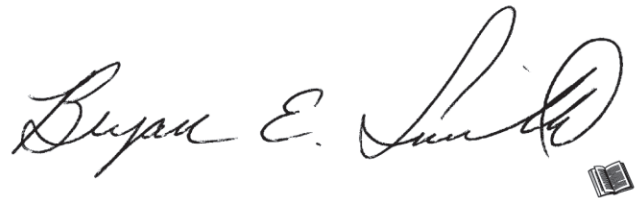
The Denning Township Officials in Franklin County contacted their legislators with a very well-written letter that pointed out that a nearby commission county that voted to eliminate their road districts back in 2004 voted in 2010 to reconsider this move as “the service they received from the county did not meet the standards of that provided by the road districts.”

I personally saw firsthand the great job that township highway commissioners did in destroying the snow obstacles on the roads. Traveling one day, I went through a city where it appeared that the roads hadn’t seen a plow since it snowed. When I made it

out of the city and into the township maintenance area, the roads were clear and safe.

The winds of change are blowing in Springfield and as a township official, there has NEVER been a more important time to be ready to fight! I cannot say “thank you” enough to all the township highway commissioners across Illinois who worked long and hard to keep our roads open, safe and passable during our recent blasts of winter. I also cannot say thanks enough to all the highway commissioners and other township officials who called their legislators to urge opposition to Senate Bill 1811. Our collective voices were definitely heard and it’s making an impact.

Now is not the time to let down our guard. Keep calling and talking to your legislators. Keep your weapons handy and your eyes open because there may be an attack coming on the horizon!



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