



from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

Participation: It Matters!



AS I WRITE THIS ARTICLE, the results of the April 2 Consolidated Election are known. While this year was not an election for township officials, the results for the most part were interesting.

Here in Springfield (Sangamon County), of the over 137,000 registered voters, only a little over 35,000 cast their ballots. That's not even 26%! Only this small number of people determined who would be representing them on the various municipal and school boards that were up for election. The folks elected by the small number of voters will be the ones determining what our children learn in school, how many streets are repaired within a municipality, and how much folks will be taxed for those things. Every vote does count, and here in Springfield one of the aldermanic races showed only 1 vote separating the top two vote getters.

The day after the consolidated election was April 3, the date of the 37th Annual Township Topics Day in Springfield. Township Topics Day is TOI's annual lobby day event where Township Officials from across the state, both rural and urban, travel to Springfield and meet with their legislator(s) and others, providing information about township legislative concerns. In my mind, this is always a great opportunity for everyone to participate actively in the legislative process.

This year however, much like the turnout on the day before for the election, we had approximately 135 registered attendees for Topics Day. While down a little

from previous years, the turnout was a little disappointing because of the numerous negative Township pieces of legislation we are facing. In fact, the next day a vote was held on one of the "bad" township bills (HB 348) and, though it passed the house, the vote was much more in our favor than when the almost same bill was voted on in 2018. I owe that to the hard work of many of our members who helped us out by contacting legislators and asking them to support us.



I recently attended a function where one of the guest speakers was a legislator who spoke on communicating with your legislators, and he singled out TOI for having a great legislative event each year that brings in officials from all over the state. While I was pleased to hear his compliment, it really proved to me that that your active involvement and participation *does not* go unnoticed.

The dismal turnout for the consolidated election was disappointing. It's not like there aren't ample opportunities to vote with early voting, vote by mail, etc. There's simply no excuse for not voting or, for that matter, attending Township Topics Day.

Whether it's at the ballot box on election day or attending Township Topics Day, your participation is vital and makes a difference!