



from your Executive Director

By Bryan E. Smith

TOI Executive Director

Farewell

AFTER SEEING THIS MONTH'S COVER, if you didn't already know, I will be retiring as Executive Director/CEO of the Township Officials of Illinois on August 31. After 35 years as an employee of the Association, with 25 of those years as Executive Director/CEO, I submitted my letter of intent to not renew my employment contract when it expires on August 31 and to instead retire. The TOI Board of Director accepted my decision and then unanimously appointed Associate Director Jerry B. Crabtree as TOI's Executive Director effective September 1, 2021.

TOI has been my only career. In fact, 35 years ago I graduated from Millikin University on a Sunday and drove to Astoria (where TOI's Office was located at the time) and went to work the following Monday. I was TOI's first-ever Associate Director. I was appointed as TOI's third Executive Director in 1996, after almost 10 years of the job training as Associate Director. The good news is that Jerry Crabtree has 16 years of practical experience working with me as my "right hand." I encourage all of you to provide Jerry the support you have given me for the last 35 years. One of the most important qualities Jerry possesses and brings to the table is an understanding that there is no "I" in team. During his tenure as my "right hand," Jerry has learned and supported the concept that great things can be accomplished if no one cares who gets the credit. I'm confident in the days ahead we will hear him say "we (or you)" did this, or that, or whatever. He has the knowledge needed for the future.

As I prepare to exit, the Association is stronger than it was 25 years ago when I became Executive Director. We are still "fighting for Township Government's survival" just like we were 25 years ago. But we are still here, and they aren't going to beat us down! TOI is still full of life, needing only greater participation from its members.

I have seen TOI grow and change. I've been in 3 different offices and technology has caused our functions to change dramatically over the years. When I started

35 years ago, we used only typewriters and wrote letters on a daily basis. Today, almost everything is done electronically, and I haven't written letters, only emails, in I can't remember how long!

I made a promise 25 years ago and I believe I've kept it. That was to fight for and promote township government the best I could. In fact, years ago someone called me the "Township Cheerleader." I didn't do it alone,

though. I enjoyed the support of *many* great Board of Directors and *outstanding* groups of Officers throughout the years. I've also been blessed with fantastic staff, who through the years have gone "above and beyond." Collectively we worked for and fought for Township Government. As I prepare to depart and assume the position of ex-Executive Director, I know the organization will be in good hands.

Probably the best part of this job for me has been the interactions I've had with individual members. I've had the opportunity to meet with township officials up and down the state in Town Halls, Road District garages, restaurants, schools, church basements, and yes, even kitchen tables at some folks' homes. Serving as your Executive Director has been a dream fulfilled.

By my count, I've written 275 articles in my 25 years as Executive Director. I hope you have enjoyed reading what I've wrote. I've had a good run the last 25 years as TOI's second longest serving Chief Executive Officer and you have made it possible. I can't say "Thank You" enough. I will likely not see some of you ever again. Finality of ending relationships is difficult. But I know you will keep "fighting the good fight."

As I prepare to clean out my desk, please know that I will continue to be the biggest "Township Cheerleader" there is. Township Government has a very bright future ahead and I wish you all the best! If you wish to stay in touch, please feel free to email me at my personal email, townshipcheerleader@gmail.com.

