

# Report Snapshot



## Local Government:

- Efficient and effective
- Popular (elected officials have high ratings)
- Lower labor costs
- Quality core services

## Expenditures Per Capita:

- Smaller governments spend and borrow less
- Smaller forms of government are more cost efficient providing more services at a reduced cost
- Intergovernmental agreements and cooperation

## Labor/Benefit Costs:

- Local townships employ a larger share of part time employees and have lower benefit costs

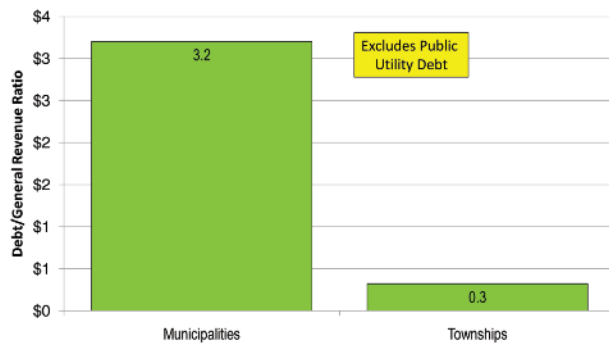
## Services:

**Myth: Combining services will save money and offer greater efficiencies. As well, the claimed “duplication of services” virtually never exists. Local governments have specific geographical areas of responsibilities.**

## Smaller Governments Are More Efficient:

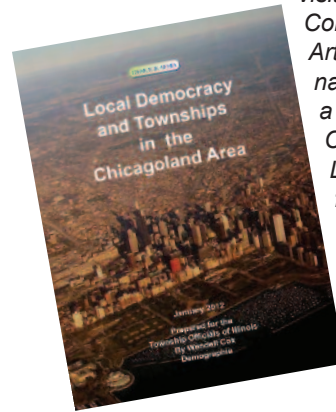
**In Illinois, the data shows that smaller local governments, including townships, drive greater efficiency, despite theories to the contrary. Local democracy is simply less expensive.**

**General Obligation Debt/Revenue**  
CHICAGOLAND AREA: 2010



## About the Report Author

*Wendell Cox is principal of Wendell Cox Consultancy, an international public policy firm headquartered in the St. Louis, Missouri-Illinois metropolitan area. He has published research on local and regional governance issues in Toronto, Pennsylvania, New York, Indiana and Michigan and spoken widely on the subject. He is a visiting professor at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Metiers in Paris (a national university) and has a BA in Government from California State University, Los Angeles and an MBA from Pepperdine University.*



To see the entire report, *Local Democracy and Townships in the Chicagoland Area*, visit our website at [www.toi.org](http://www.toi.org).

## About the Township Officials of Illinois

Township government in Illinois today is a vital community link in the Illinois local government system. More than 8 million people are served by township government, which provides important quality-of-life services. Our townships often provide service at little or no cost to taxpayers. Because townships in Illinois are local in nature, they are able to identify specific community needs and respond to them with creative programs and services.

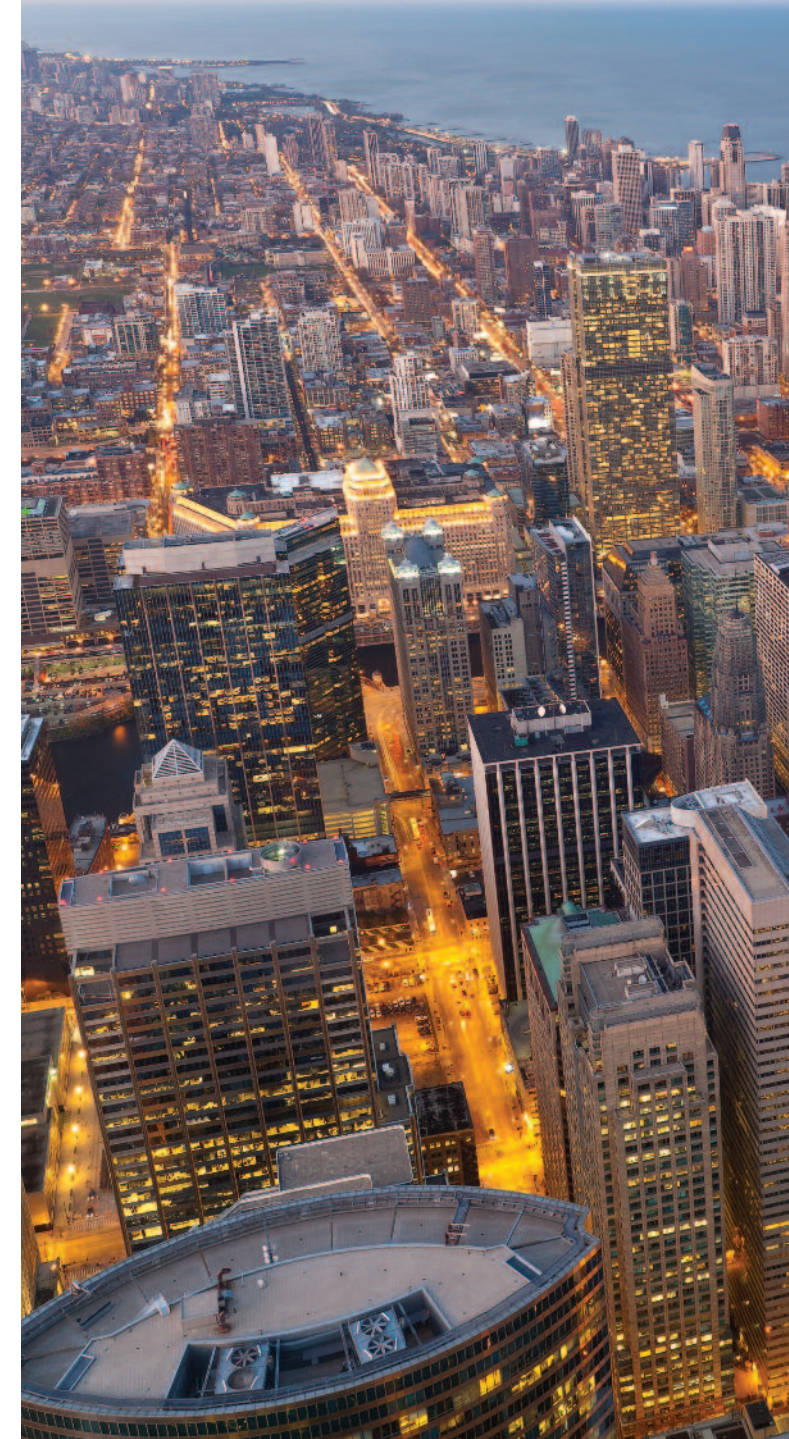
Townships in Illinois are better able to respond to local needs than larger forms of government because our proximity to our constituents keeps us in touch. Townships provide services without government bureaucracy.

**The Township Officials of Illinois offices are located at 3217 Northfield Drive, Springfield, Illinois, 62702. Our telephone number is 217/744-2212 and our fax is 217/744-7419. Call toll free 866/897-4688 or visit [www.toi.org](http://www.toi.org).**



# Report Summary

## Local Democracy and Townships in the Chicagoland Area



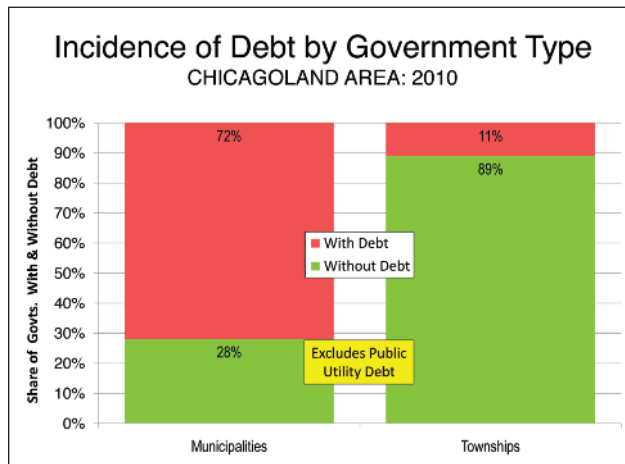
# Report Summary

## Local Democracy And Townships In The Chicagoland Area

This report from noted researcher Wendell Cox examines the value of townships in Illinois, particularly in the Chicagoland (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry and Will counties) area. It answers questions about how tax dollars are used, as well as the value of services provided, as townships are now under attack. Here are highlights from the report:

### Don't Confuse Efficiency With Fewer Government Bodies

- Townships keep us going by maintaining roads, assessing property and/or providing help to taxpayers with taxes and assessments, and supporting the needy, all with less cost
- Smaller does equal better when it comes to running efficient government
- Townships statewide have the lowest labor costs, thanks to using many part-time workers who draw less in pay and benefits
- Debt is virtually non-existent in smaller governments, allowing them to cover unforeseen expenses and avoid costly borrowing that has put large city and state budgets in distress



### Chicagoland: Bigger Isn't Necessarily Better, But It Will Cost You More

- More than half of township workers in the Chicagoland area are part-time, compared to 36 percent for villages and just 8 percent for cities
- 72 percent of municipalities in the Chicagoland area carried debt in 2010, compared to just 11 percent of townships

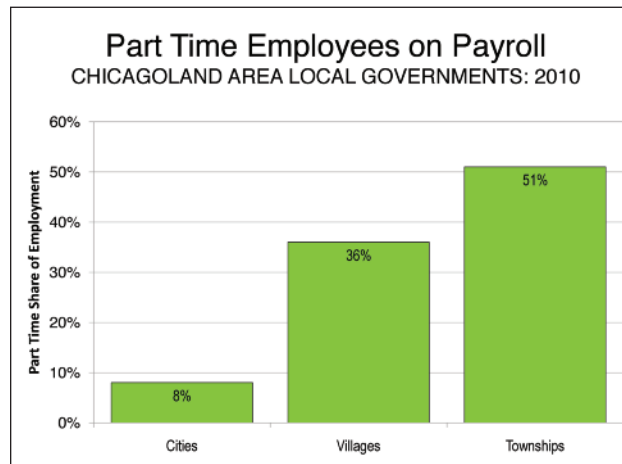
### Townships Are Local Democracy At Its Finest

- Individual citizens have a greater say and more influence, providing powerful incentives to hold elected officials accountable – especially through spending and borrowing
- Interest groups have less influence, while individuals have more influence

*Small local governments such as townships provide many benefits. They save taxpayer money and provide topnotch, coordinated services, plus they spend and borrow less than other forms of government.*

### Efforts To Abolish Or Consolidate Townships Miss The Mark

- Proposals pushing to abolish or consolidate local governments usually stem from the belief that “bigger governments spend less” but the facts above prove that belief wrong
- Townships have exclusive geographical service areas, so the argument that too many local governments provide duplicative services is just not true



- Townships save money to be good fiscal stewards, not to hoard taxpayer money. Sound reserves cover unforeseen costs, such as equipment purchases or disaster response, without having to pay more to borrow and dig holes deeper
- As governments get bigger, their connections to the people they serve diminish. Elected officials can't as easily directly oversee efficiency and effectiveness of public services

### Bigger Is Not Better In Local Government

Generally, larger local governments are not more efficient than smaller governments. Further, there is virtually no evidence that consolidations improve *actual* government efficiency. Indeed, the evidence on consolidation seems generally to support the opposite conclusion – that smaller governments are more efficient. Also importantly, the remoteness of larger governments can result in less effective public services.

The success of local democracy is principally the result of the fact that government is closer to the people. The people, the electorate, stand a much better chance of maintaining control of their government and keeping it more efficient where it is smaller.

In Illinois, the data shows that smaller local governments, including townships, drive greater efficiency, despite theories to the contrary. Local democracy is simply less expensive.

