



## Letter to the Editor

The Township Highway Commissioners of Illinois (THCOI) is the statewide organization for elected Highway Commissioners. These Commissioners are responsible for over 50% of the roads in Illinois, both rural and urban. Recently, the THCOI Board of Directors met to discuss recent legislation on the consolidation and/or elimination of Road Districts.

Consolidation or elimination can be done, but it must be for the right reasons and responsibly, without the elimination or reduction of necessary services to the people currently served by those Road Districts.

Under the new laws creating the additional powers for consolidation and/or elimination, there is no requirement to demonstrate the consolidation or elimination at issue is in the best interests of those taxpayers. The THCOI Board supports an amendment to Public Acts 100-106 and 100-107 calling for an independent entity, with experience in local government, to provide a cost study before any vote is taken. The goal of such a study is to demonstrate the consolidation or elimination is cost-efficient and will not impact the level of service(s) currently provided.

The two most important factors to THCOI before any vote is taken (and which can be discussed in such a study) are public safety and taxpayer impact. Consolidation or elimination of Road Districts can not only eliminate the accountability of the elected Highway Commissioner, but more importantly, lead to “main” or “priority” routes being lower priorities for maintenance and snow plowing. Further, the body taking control of any consolidated or discontinued Road District assumes the taxing authority. Therefore, no tax rates will go down unless the public body taking control determines that it will lower the (former) Road District rate.