

The Trend Towards Government Consolidation

by Mike A. Shea Louisville, Kentucky

Government consolidation is one of the hottest topics in government and economic development circles and has proven to be effective and beneficial nationwide.

(<http://www.kybiz.com/Reports/GLSI%20Special%20Section.pdf>).

At one time the only way a city and county could merge was by arranging for a unique piece of legislation that enabled local governments to seek voter approval at a referendum held on a local election day.

Now, because of the growth of governments, duplication of services, impediments to economic development and the huge cost of maintaining competitive governments in the same county, states have begun to pass legislation enabling cities and counties to follow a new streamlined regulatory process by which they could eventually merge... all without special legislation.

Within the last 24 months, Wisconsin, Indiana and West Virginia have all passed legislation establishing a new public process leading to a local referendum for cities and counties seeking consolidation.

Even with this new process in place, the path to a merger is a difficult one. If properly planned, a merger requires in-depth issues and campaign management spanning at least two years, and in some cases even more.

Many chambers of commerce dislike the idea of two governments with two boards of directors, two CEO's, etc, and without a doubt, government consolidations present the most complex conversation you will ever have with the electorate.

The road to a successful consolidation is expensive and arduous, involving tremendous efforts and outreach to address public concerns and questions throughout the process. But in the end, the benefits of government consolidations are proven, and include an enhanced economic development profile, the elimination of redundant and costly services and personnel, and the ability of the City/County to speak with one unified voice.

Having the proper guidance and knowledge of the challenges ahead, all backed up by extensive government consolidation campaign and issues management experience, is crucial to making a city / county merger a success.

For more information contact:

ProActive Communications

19415 Deerfield Avenue

Lansdowne, VA 20176

Phone: 571.223.0042

Fax: 571.223.0052

E-Mail: gov@getproactive.us