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University of Michigan issues timely governmental cooperation report

by **Cynthia Price**

Legal News

Governor Rick Snyder introduced a new way for the state to share revenues with municipalities, called the Economic Vitality Incentive Program, in his first policy "Special Message" to the state legislature (which, incidentally, specifically mentions favorably the regional West Michigan Strategic Alliance),

In addition to calling for updating "antiquated state laws that...impede the development of regional solutions to regional problems,...", Snyder said he will institute the new program which mandates that local governments receiving such funds will focus on intergovernmental collaboration and cooperation.

The program requires that "...by January 1, 2012, municipalities must develop plans to consolidate services that will result in taxpayer savings."

A recently-issued report from the University of Michigan's Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) says that many municipalities are already doing just that.

A key finding is that fully 72% of local governments in Michigan participate in some type of formal collaborative efforts, which 49% deem are "very successful" and 32% call "somewhat successful."

CLOSUP surveyed over 1300 Michigan local governmental units in Fall 2010 on issues of intergovernmental cooperation (IGC) as part of the Michigan Public Policy Survey.

Only 2% of the municipalities surveyed had found their IGC efforts unsuccessful.

The survey also asked if local government leaders thought they were doing enough. Forty-four percent felt that they were not, and that number jumped to 85% of leaders from the largest jurisdictions.

Moreover, government officials reported very little opposition such cooperative initiatives on the part of community groups. Only 2-3% of officials said that the majority of their municipality's board members, local business leaders, or citizens feel that current levels of cooperation are "too much."

Among those surveyed, however, there is much more support for state government incentivizing rather than mandating IGC. Over two-thirds (68%) of officials say they would not support state mandates at all (36% among the largest jurisdictions), while 69% say they would like to see grants to support planning efforts for new collaborations.

The report breaks down responses by jurisdictional type (that is, county, city, township, village), by population size, and by region.

To read the report, visit the CLOSUP web site at <http://closup.umich.edu>.



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