Press Release

Heimlich, Rhodes Want Levies to Compete on Same Ballot

Plan would halt ballooning taxes and spending

October 13, 2003 — Cincinnati, OH — Today, County Commissioner Phil Heimlich, Auditor Dusty Rhodes, and leaders of business and anti-tax organizations, released a tax and spending control plan (TASC) for Hamilton County. The most dramatic recommendation is a requirement that all special levies go on the same ballot, beginning in 2008.

"The current practice of voting on one or two levies each year does not allow voters to truly prioritize where their tax dollars should go," said Rhodes. "By putting all the levies on the same ballot, voters will be making choices as consumers and those county entities seeking funds will have to be very responsible in their requests and persuasive in their arguments, given the on-ballot competition. For the first time, there will be an incentive for them to ask for less, not more."

TASC follows the release of the Auditor's Citizens Financial Report, which showed residential property taxes rising 74.4% over 10 years, while population decreased by almost 40,000. According to the report, Hamilton County residents pay 2 - 3 times as much in property taxes as residents of Warren, Butler, and Clermont Counties.

"We are facing a $5 to $10 million dollar per year deficit in the stadium fund by 2006," said Heimlich. "If we don't stop this tax and spending train in its tracks, we'll have a wreck just like the State of Ohio did this year."

TASC would require the county to increase its reserves from $37.5 to $47.6 million to protect against these types of shortfalls and avoid the need to raise taxes in the future.

TASC also requires the County to hold growth in spending and taxes below the rate of inflation, provide cash rewards to employees who find ways to save money, and issue an annual Commissioner's Report Card to Citizens, informing the community of progress toward meeting these goals.

Leaders of Citizens Opposed to Additional Spending and Taxes (COAST), the Cincinnati Area Board of Realtors, and the Greater Cincinnati Apartment Association, urged the Board of Commissioners to adopt the proposals.

"If these measures aren't put in place," said Jim Uring, President of COAST, "and spending continues to spiral out of control, you can bet that the tax-and-spenders will offer up the (stadium) property tax rollback as the first sacrifice on the chopping block, and we can't let that happen."

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For Immediate Release