



County of Hamilton

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During my first term as County Auditor the staff came to me with a mistake. The annual license renewal letters to dog owners were printed and ready to mail without my signature. Rather than paying to print the letters again, I sent them out as they were. They contained all the important information. That is what was important. I could not justify wasting your money just to add my signature to a form letter.

The decision best explains my approach to public service. I admit it. I am a tightwad with my money. I do not treat your money any differently. Over \$1.8 billion goes through our office every year. That includes paying the county's bills and sending tax settlements to cities, villages, townships, school districts and taxing entities twice a year.

Being audited every year we have to be sharp. Over the past few years we have received in-person recognition of the Auditor of State and Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting awards from the Government Finance Officers of America (GFOA). More importantly, we have never lost a penny of taxpayer money and never received a "finding for recovery" for lost or misspent funds from the auditors.

More evidence of my respect for your tax dollars shows in my cutting our office staff by over fifty percent (50%) through attrition and cross-training. That core belief allowed me to give back \$14 million in unspent funds to the local governments and schools in Hamilton County just this year. That money came from the Real Estate Assessment Fund, a small portion of every tax levy, which is controlled by the County Auditor.

I was the first Hamilton County Auditor to return money from this fund. Over the years I returned just under \$50 million. I could have legally spent every dollar. I did not. There is that tightwad thing again.

One of the best things about serving as County Auditor is there is always something new occurring. This is not the spot for someone who wants to "rest on his or her laurels". Every day brings a new challenge or the chance to make our service better. What is ahead for your County Auditor's office?

We will continue the best accounting practices as previously recognized and honored. We will go the extra mile to update and improve our mass reappraisals consistent with the law. As the result of our improvements, our 2017 valuations received the fewest appeals in years after a full reappraisal. Contrary to some suggestions we cannot make radical changes in the reappraisal process. It is controlled by state law.

A major mapping project will add functionality to our website, hamiltoncountyauditor.org,

which is generally acknowledged as one of the best in the area. The kind of critical thinking that made us one of the first major metropolitan areas in the country with a public property search website will keep us ahead of the curve utilizing new technology.

Our office is a creation of the state so we often suggest legislation and work with the Ohio County Auditor's Association to assure its passage. I look forward to continuing to work with our local State Representatives and Senators on several initiatives.

One of my first goals is to close the "LLC loophole" that allows the transfer of property without paying the transfer fee or revealing the sale price. The state also has many subsidized low-income housing properties, most of them valued considerably lower than fair market value by the courts. The Ohio General Assembly must make the necessary changes so that these projects are valued realistically.

Ohio is one of only three states that does not test fuel quality. We could do that with existing Weights and Measures staff at the same time we test for quantity at no additional cost. I will work to overcome the lobbyists who have been successful at blocking corrective legislation for years.

I am extremely grateful to Hamilton County citizens for trusting me to serve in this important, independent office. If I am successful in seeking re-election this year, I pledge that I will serve the next four-years continuing to respect your tax dollars as well as the confidence you have placed in me.

----Dusty Rhodes----