



County of Hamilton

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THERE THEY GO AGAIN

Dusty Rhodes, Hamilton County Auditor

The present policy of the State of Ohio is to fatten its purse at the expense of local governments. It isn't surprising that the hefty balances in the "Rainy Day Fund" almost exactly match the amount that has been taken from the Local Government Fund over the past two years.

This was done by the current administration and a compliant legislature while encouraging us to "tighten our belts" with "shared services" and "conservative government". Here's what a real conservative said in 1967: On William F. Buckley's "Firing Line", then California Governor Ronald Reagan praised "...the local community, where the real basic services that people must depend on every day are furnished".

He criticized the practice of a bigger government pre-empting tax sources and revenue and then giving some back as special gifts with strings attached. Sound familiar? This year began with the "Enquirer" reporting on an area "wish list" for state grants. Aside from "wishing" the State would complete its pledge of \$80 million for the stadiums (they're still \$7.5 million short), I'm wondering why these possible new grants take precedence over existing basic local services.

What the current administration doesn't want to know is that the vast majority of local governments were operating conservatively, had already "tightened their belts" and were "sharing services" whenever possible. The most efficient and accountable governments are those closest to the people.

The State's deliberate assault on us is not limited to taking a meat axe to the Local Government Fund. After eliminating the estate tax the state has also cancelled two property tax reductions. It is important to remember how they began.

In the early 1970s Governor John Gilligan proposed the first state income tax. One way he built support was to earmark a portion of it for a 10% reduction of local property tax levies. In the 1980s Governor Richard Celeste increased the state income tax and again provided a property tax reduction to help sell it.

Both the original 10% reduction and the 2.5% owner-occupied reduction have now been eliminated for new tax levies. The State has reneged on its promise. This will be an increased burden for taxpayers. We now have two classes of property tax levies, the old ones that get the reductions and the new ones which will not.

Adding insult to injury, state lawmakers seem oblivious to all the work and expense required to administer this dual system. If they want to stop by our office we can enlighten them.

The State of Ohio's local property tax relief joins other broken promises of recent memory. Recall "If you like your present health care plan you can keep it". Or "Vote for me and I'll stop the streetcar".

Now the State, having conveniently forgotten its historic commitment to local governments, has clearly declared war on our counties, cities, villages and townships. Borrowing loosely again from President Reagan, "there they go again".

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