I am Jeff Gaskin, the Mayor of South Point, the southern most village in Ohio. I'd like to tell you our story of a replacement levy. We are a village of 4000 (about 1200 voters). I joined the Fire Department when I turned 16. I don't get to do much anymore, but I can still operate a truck. About 30 years ago we decided to ask for a fire levy. We figured we could buy a truck and the levy could make the payments for 10 years and then we could buy another. Great idea, at the time. Our first truck (we still have it) cost $300,000. Later it was time to buy another, it cost more and we had to change our specifications. A few years ago, number two was paid for and we really had to change things up and bought just a rescue pumper, because the levy money was staying mostly the same each year. But we still needed a big pumper.

A new pumper was going to cost in the neighborhood of one million dollars. We knew we were going to have to do something in order to get a new truck. We decided on a replacement levy. We knew that typically, a fire levy almost always passed. Working with our county auditor we managed to get the levy on the ballot. It passed, not with the margin as in the past, but it passed. There were questions about raising taxes. We were honest, yes, taxes would raise. Obviously, if people asked, we told them, and there were some against the levy. We advised them to go to the auditors web page to find out just how much.

I know I'm talking about my experience today and fire trucks. Our village also has an operating levy and a Police levy. There are 17 townships in my rural, county, most with Fire Depts, and they are all struggling to maintain their ability to serve their communities on money they get wherever they can, and most depend of levies and have used replacement levies.

I'm headed to saying that to at least to small communities like South Point, having a tool like the replacement levy is important to have, to manage our revenue stream. I would ask that you look at managing it differently rather than just throwing it out altogether.