

January 23, 2024

Chairman Roemer, Vice Chair Lorenz, Ranking Member Troy, and members of the House Ways & Means Committee. My name is Beth Van Haaren. I am Township Trustee in Bethel Township, Miami County. I am opposed to HB 344 which would eliminate the option to replace a property tax levy.

I have worked on committees to pass multiple school and township levies over the past 20 years. It is unbelievably hard work to get a levy passed. You need a full committee of at least 15-25 people (and that is just in my small community of 5000 people). Donations are needed, recruitment of volunteers, door to door, phone calls, create flyers and postcards to inform voters, host informational sessions, create and post social media content, and still, my township has an uphill battle.

As a township, we do our utmost to cross train our employees, apply for grants and squeeze every dollar. Yet all our costs go up. In my 18 years as a township trustee, we have replaced 3 different levies - our 1.0 mill Police and Fire Levy (permanent levy) in 2021 after 22 years of generating approximately the same amount, our 3.8 mil general fund levy, replaced in 2022 after 19 years of generating the approximately the same amount and a Fire/EMS levy that was a replacement with increase. With the elimination of replacements, we will have to placing multiple levies for the same issue, which will confuse voters even more than keeping the option of a replacement. Also, multiple levies will just cost townships more money as we pay a % of every levy back to the county.

With the estate tax elimination, the Tangible Property tax elimination, and the reduction of the local government fund, we are trying to provide the same or better services as we were 10 years ago, but it is difficult. Removing the option to replace a levy will restrict our ability to fund essential road maintenance, sewer and water infrastructure, fire/EMS/police services, and fight annexation. All services our residents want us to provide. For example, in 1999 our 40 hours of extra police service cost the township around \$70k and our 1 mill levy generated about \$90k. In 2024, our sheriff's contract will cost us \$130,351 plus fuel but since we REPLACED the levy in 2021, our 1.0 mill levy is now generating approximately \$150,000. We will save the extra money it generates and use it for additional years' services. However, we estimate we would need to replace the levy again sometime between 2030-2034.

Taking away the ability of a township to replace a levy just ensures that the township will eventually not be able to provide important services to residents. I would urge all members to vote NO on HB 344 and continue to allow townships to have the ability to renew or replace property tax levies.

Thank you for your consideration of my position on HB 344. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Beth van Haaren  
Bethel Township Trustee, Miami County Ohio  
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