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Keep Rural Minnesota Strong Keep Township Rights Strong

January 11, 2019

Dear Fellow Township Official,

As a township officer, you know that township government is the closest form of government to the people and that townships must have strong local control in order to effectively serve the community. Simply put, strong rural communities need strong local control.

But corporate special interests don't want power in the hands of township officials. Time and time again, they have pushed bills at the Minnesota Legislature to weaken our township rights, especially our township interim ordinance powers. The interim ordinance (also called a moratorium) allows a township to quickly put a temporary freeze on major development proposals. This gives the community time to review or create appropriate zoning ordinances. This is essential when the community is caught off-guard by unanticipated proposals, especially those from outside corporate interests, such as a large-scale factory farm.

Most townships never need to exercise their interim ordinance power, but the fact that we have it forces outside interests and developers to take our concerns seriously. You can bet that without this power, many developers would ignore township concerns. It's worth reflecting on some of the battles we have won over the years to keep this township right strong:

- **2004: Senate File 2108 (Sen. David Hann)** would have fatally weakened the power of townships to enact a moratorium on a factory farm proposed in their community. That year, corporate ag interests targeted township local control with the backing of then-Governor Tim Pawlenty.
- **2008: House File 1254 (Rep. Hosch) and Senate File 1088 (Sen. Jim Vickerman)** would have weakened our township power to enact a moratorium by creating unneeded delays in how quickly one can be enacted.
- **2011: House File 389 (Rep. Mike Beard) and Senate File 270 (Sen. Ray Vandever)** required a two-thirds super-majority to enact a moratorium and would have exempted from the moratorium projects that had merely filed the paperwork for a permit. We fought this bill for two years and killed it on the Senate floor.
- **2017: House File 330 (Rep. Jim Nash) and Senate File 201 (Sen. Dan Hall)** again tried to impose a super-majority and unneeded delays on adoption of a moratorium. Responding to our concerns, then-Governor Mark Dayton vetoed this bill.

We defeated all these bills by acting together and speaking up to keep local control strong.

-OVER-

Now it is again time to act together and speak up for local control. The Minnesota Legislature convened on January 8th with some big changes. We have a new Governor and 39 newly-elected state legislators. What hasn't changed is that special interests will be working to undermine our township rights. At the Capitol, surrounded by well-paid lobbyists representing corporate special interests, it is all too easy for legislators to lose perspective. We need to send the message now that weakening local control must be kept off the table.

We are calling on you to take these actions to ensure township local control stays strong:

1. Call Governor Tim Walz at 651-201-3400 or 800-657-3717.

Suggested message: "My name is _____ and I'm a township officer calling from _____ Township. I am calling you to let you know that Minnesotans believe in strong local control and township rights. Weakening township local control weakens our rural communities. I urge you to stand up for rural communities by making it clear that you will veto any bill that weakens township powers and local control."

2. Call your Senator and Representative and let them know that you want them fighting for local control. Your elected officials are:

Suggested message: "My name is _____ and I'm a township officer calling from _____ Township. I am calling to let you know that Minnesotans value strong local control and township rights. Township rights are working as is and should be left alone. An important township right that must stay strong is the township authority to enact an interim ordinance or temporary moratorium. As my legislator, I want you to stand up for township rights."

When you call, be sure to leave your name and what township and county you are calling from.

3. Stay engaged by sending us back the enclosed postcard. We will let you know when any bill weakening township rights is introduced and how you can take action.

We know that rights that are not defended are lost, and that we keep them strong by standing together.

As one of over 9,000 elected township officers representing Minnesota's over 1,700+ townships, you can make a difference by joining us in speaking up for township rights. Please, make these calls today.

Sincerely,

As township officials and Land Stewardship Project members,



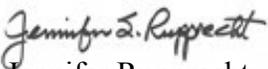
Nancy Barsness
Pope County
New Prairie Township



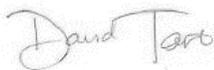
Nancy Hammerschmidt
Kandiyohi County
New London Township



Richard Moudry
Redwood County
Westline Township



Jennifer Rupperecht
Winona County
Norton Township



David Tart
Fillmore County
Forestville Township



Mark Wickenhauser
Carver County
Waconia Township

P.S. The Land Stewardship Project has a decades-long track record of fighting to keep township rights strong at the Minnesota Legislature. We encourage you to consider becoming an LSP member.