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METRO GOVERNMENT JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE AND HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEES ON CITIES

Report to Members of the
Second Session of the Sixty-seventh General Assembly

State of Iowa
1978

1977 REPORT

METRO GOVERNMENT JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE
SENATE AND HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEES ON CITIES

The Legislative Council approved creation of the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee of the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities to be composed of five members from the Senate Standing Committee on Cities and five members from the House Standing Committee on Cities.

The Co-chairpersons of the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee were Senator Tom Slater and Representative B. Joseph Rinas. Other legislators appointed to the Joint Subcommittee were Senator James E. Briles, Senator Alvin V. Miller, Senator Charles P. Miller, Senator David M. Readinger, Representative Robert F. Bina, Representative Fred Koogler, Representative Lyle R. Krewson, and Representative Henry C. Wulff. Representative Wulff resigned from the General Assembly, and no one was appointed to replace him on the Joint Subcommittee.

During the 1977 interim, the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee held a total of two of its three authorized meetings. In the course of its two meetings, the Joint Subcommittee heard testimony relating to Senate File 412 specifically and to the concept of metro government generally. Speakers included: Harry Smith, Institute of Public Affairs, University of Iowa; Harold Riehm, Executive Director, Public Service Research, Inc.; John McCormick, Community and Political Affairs Editor, Quad City Times; Ardith Maney, Professor of Political Science, Iowa State University; John Torbert, Iowa State Association of Counties; Larry Tuel, City Development Board; and Robert Harpster, Executive Director, League of Iowa Municipalities.

With a majority of Senate members present, but without a majority of House members present, the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee of the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities made the following recommendations:

1. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends creation of a standing committee on local government in each house of the General Assembly in lieu of separate standing committees on cities and counties.

2. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends passage of H.J.R. 9, the Home Rule Joint Resolution, before progressing further in implementing metro government concepts.

3. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends that the House Standing Committee on Ways and Means consider S.F. 154 for passage in the House this session. S.F. 154 abolishes city assessors so that after 1983 each county would have only one

assessor. At the present time, 19 cities have assessors. Senate File 154 passed the Senate last session.

4. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends that the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities each appoint a subcommittee to study existing chapter 28E agreements that are on record with the secretary of state. The study should focus on form, areas dealt with, and accountability to the electorate of the governmental bodies entering into such agreements.

5. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends that the two issues of local option taxation on one hand and consolidation of governmental units on the other hand should be considered separately. They should not be tied together as they are in Senate File 412.

6. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends that the General Assembly consider passing a local option tax bill this year. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends passage of a local option tax bill.

7. The Metro Government Joint Subcommittee recommends that a joint subcommittee on metro government be appointed to continue studying the issue next interim, and a resolution to that end should be drafted by the Legislative Service Bureau. A copy of that concurrent resolution is attached to this report.

Also attached to this report is a letter from Co-chairpersons B. Joseph Rinas and Tom Slater addressed to the Iowa Legislative Council. It attempts to explain some of the actions taken by the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee of the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities.

SENATE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. _____

By

1 WHEREAS, there currently are 955 cities, 99 counties,
2 451 school districts and 1647 townships in Iowa; and

3 WHEREAS, these governmental units in 1977 levied
4 nearly \$900 million in property taxes, employed approxi-
5 mately 75,000 persons, and directly affected the lives
6 of every Iowan; and

7 WHEREAS, these units of government overlap geograph-
8 ically and sometimes functionally and contain capital
9 and personnel resources which sometimes could best be
10 used in a cooperative manner; and

11 WHEREAS, a study of the efficiency and effectiveness
12 of these units of government was begun in the 1977
13 interim by the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee of
14 the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities;

15 NOW THEREFORE,

16 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE, THE HOUSE CONCURRING,
17 That the legislative council is authorized to approve
18 a joint subcommittee as provided by law, composed of
19 members of the Senate and House Standing Committees on
20 Cities of the 67th General Assembly representing both
21 political parties to continue studying the interaction
22 of local jurisdictions, the efficacy of consolidating
23 certain governmental units or functions and assigning
24 certain functions to other jurisdictions, and the
25 desirability of broadening the taxation powers of all
26 local jurisdictions; and

27 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the joint subcommittee
28 shall prepare a report of its findings and submit it to
29 the legislative council and to the members of the 68th
30 General Assembly, 1979 Session, accompanied by legis-
31 lative bill drafts designed to carry out the recommenda-
32 tions of the joint subcommittee.

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STATE HOUSE
DES MOINES, IOWA 50319
TELEPHONE 515/281-3566
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December 12, 1977

Iowa Legislative Council
State House
Des Moines, Iowa 50319

Members of the Legislative Council:

In reviewing Senate File 412 specifically and the concept of metro government generally, the Metro Government Joint Subcommittee of the Senate and House Standing Committees on Cities decided that any specific recommendations concerning the mechanics of local government reorganization at this time would be premature. Instead, we offer a series of recommendations which, in our judgment, will provide the best possible structural environment for the eventual development of those mechanics.

As you are no doubt aware, Iowa presently provides for intergovernmental cooperative efforts via Chapter 28E agreements. When Chapter 28E of the Code is viewed in the context of ultimate passage of County Home Rule, it becomes apparent that almost any city and county function may be combined, allowing the realization of all the efficiencies and economies of scale anticipated under metropolitan government. Only two questions remain:

- 1) Will county and city governments willingly cooperate under Chapter 28E agreements?
- 2) If they use Chapter 28E agreements, will the resulting services delivery administration be accountable to those served, or will accountability be reduced?

In light of those serious questions, our Joint Subcommittee recommends an in-depth study of existing Chapter 28E agreements be undertaken in the hopes that such a study will provide conclusive answers.

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Interestingly, one of the primary reasons for considering metro government is the proliferation of special function governmental subdivisions. This proliferation tends to foster indirect accountability to any one existing governing body. During our two days of hearings, testimony repeatedly cited lack of local governmental budget flexibility as the primary incentive for the creation of these new subdivisions. As a result, our Joint Subcommittee recommends passage of local option tax alternatives to property taxation and a comprehensive review of current local budget limits.

Finally, we would like to commend Senator Kinley for his initiative in offering a new approach to the problem of overlapping and inefficient local services delivery. His draft, Senate File 412, contains some functional paradoxes, but by and large, it is a model piece of legislation.

If you ladies and gentlemen have any questions concerning our attached Subcommittee report, we are at your service.

Sincerely,

Representative B. Joseph Rinas
Co-Chairperson

Senator Tom Slater
Co-chairperson

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