



# Waukesha County

## Office of the County Executive

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### **TOWN INCORPORATION LOOPHOLE WILL LEAD TO YEARS OF WASTEFUL GOVERNMENT**

*By Waukesha County Executive Paul Farrow*

Towns are scrambling to take advantage of a soon-to-expire state law they think will give them increased local control, but instead will make big government permanent, leading to years of waste. Taxpayers will, of course, foot the bill.

A small window is open that will fast track the process for towns to incorporate to become cities and villages. Towns across the state want to fix their borders, making the invisible lines between towns and their neighbors permanent. What they aren't considering is that this will virtually guarantee the cost to operate their government will increase, and taxes will increase with it.

Here in Waukesha County, we are familiar with town-versus-city and village battles. We have two Pewaukees, two Brookfields, two Waukeshas, two Mertons, Mukwonagos, Delafields, Eagles, and two Oconomowocs. In other words, too many governments, too much duplication of services and too much waste. We should work to shrink the number of governments that are taxing our citizens, not preserve them in perpetuity.

We all know the financial challenges facing local government are not going away. Governments in Wisconsin have been cutting costs and tightening belts for years because of strict levy limits. Most local governments cut the fat long ago. We are now at a point where service cuts are a reality. In order to maintain current services to residents we should encourage merging municipalities. Locking in invisible boundaries between them only perpetuates governments and locks in duplication and waste.

In the limited time the legislature is in session before next year's elections, our Senators and State Representatives should make reducing the number of governments easier. A number of obstacles make that very difficult. Those obstacles should be identified, studied and removed to prevent future service reductions without big jumps in taxes.

Waukesha County is recognized nationally for smart budget practices that keep taxes low while providing high-quality services, but even the best budget practices can be hamstrung when bad decisions are made at the state and local level. I hope that leaders at all levels will look not just at how their decisions impact residents today, but well into the future.

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