

Letter to the Editor  
Levy Court Funding  
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Commissioner  
5<sup>th</sup> Levy Court District

I am angry. I am starting to hear several rumors from the area of Legislative Hall that the counties should well beware of pending changes in funding for critical services that the State provides to the Counties.

In particular is funding for Emergency Management Services, or paramedics. In 1990, the State entered an agreement to fund 60% of paramedic services. This agreement has been modified several times to the current 30% funding, yet they still tell us how to run this service. This is starting to feel like an unfunded mandate from the State, where they dictate how the service is to be provided but do not provide the funding. Any further reductions in funding from the State will affect the excellent service you are already accustomed to, and could result in a tax increase to maintain that service.

In 2009, the State mandated that the counties assume dog control services. The result of this was around \$900,000 in new expenses that the State relinquished and the County had to assume. We had to raise property taxes then to pay the bills.

Another potential disastrous move by the State is a modification to the Real Estate Transfer Tax apportionment. This tax is paid whenever property changes hands, usually from a County property owner to a new family or out-of-stater. The taxes are used by the County to increase those services that are affected by growth, such as the paramedic services and parks.

Kent County has been very diligent in taking care of your tax dollars. In the seven years I have been on Levy Court, the County budget was reduced from nearly \$29million to the current \$24million, the number of employees was cut by 15%, and we continue to watch every dollar that is spent. There is nothing frivolous about Kent County's spending habits.

It is time for the State Legislators to recognize that the County Commissioners are not here for them to use to continue their dreadful management of the State budget. Any changes as rumored here will affect our ability to meet their mandated service protocols for paramedics, which puts the lives of Kent Countians at risk.

When Kent County Levy Court identified that our revenues would not meet expenses, we did not create new revenues, and we did not go looking for someone else to burden and take the blame for raising taxes.

I, for one, am tired of this atmosphere of the State Legislators blaming someone else for their failings and of looking to force other governments to increase taxes so that they do not have to seriously look within to balance their budget. There have been many ideas brought forth to save millions and millions of State dollars, which have been summarily dismissed by the State leadership because they lack the wherewithal to make the tough choices on their own. If they can't balance their budget by finding the cuts necessary, let them increase taxes and bear the blame, not the Counties. We have worked very hard to protect your tax dollars and it is just not fair.