

Local Government is Democracy in Action

Written by Jeff Smith, State Senator District 31

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/gb-city-hall2-s460.jpg>



Senator Smith writes about the different levels of local government and the importance of ensuring that the legislature funds them adequately.

MADISON - "Where do you live?"

There are a lot of ways to answer that question. I live in the United States, in the state of Wisconsin, in Eau Claire County, and in the town of Brunswick. Each of these jurisdictions is a "unit of government" and each has its own powers and responsibilities.

The term "local units of government" can mean cities, villages, towns or counties. Each of these local subdivisions has its own role and its own kind of authority. Each has limits to its powers, as determined by statute, and there are differences in the way each is governed and operated.

Seventy percent of Wisconsin's population live in a city or village. Cities and villages are both created by the state, which delegates authority to local units of government. Our constitution describes these units of government as "home rule," which means they have the ability to govern themselves as they see fit, so long as they abide by the state and federal law.

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