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landstewardshipproject.org

July 4, 2008

“Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.”
— Wendell Phillips

Dear Fellow Township Official,

As township officers we understand that local control is at the heart of a strong democracy. Township government is the closest to the people and townships need local control in order to serve the community and protect it from unwanted and harmful development.

The good news is that the Minnesota Legislature adjourned in May with township rights still strong. While special interests pushed legislation to weaken township local control, they were defeated, in large part due to grassroots opposition from township officers and residents. The Land Stewardship Project (LSP) was at the Capitol to track this issue and speak up for these rights, along with the Minnesota Association of Townships (MAT) and others.

Here is how special interests attempted to weaken our rights:

- **House File 1254 — Lobbyists for large-scale developers backed this legislation to effectively gut the interim ordinance power of townships.** An interim ordinance allows a township to quickly put a temporary freeze on new major development. This power is essential when the community is caught off guard by unanticipated proposals such as a big-box-store (like Wal-Mart) or a large-scale factory farm. An interim ordinance allows the township time to review or create the appropriate zoning ordinances to deal with controversial developments. This right allows townships to stand up to unscrupulous developers who seek out communities with outdated zoning ordinances. The bill died in committee under strong opposition.
- **Senate File 1402 — Sen. Steve Dille (R-Dassel) pushed this legislation that would undermine township rights.** As introduced, the bill pressed local units of government into adopting the “State Livestock Production Policy” and set impractical top-down criteria for preserving farmland and open spaces. Of course, preserving farmland is critical but one-size-fits-all, state-imposed criteria won’t work. Under pressure from LSP, MAT and others, all language that undermined township and county rights was removed. As passed, the bill creates a task force to look into the issue of preserving farmland. LSP will be watching to ensure that the task force’s recommendations do not negatively affect local control.

Ultimately, both attempts to weaken local control were defeated through grassroots action that let state legislators know Minnesotans value strong local democracy.

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Other states have seen their township rights significantly weakened over the years – most recently Wisconsin and Pennsylvania. This was the result of campaigns driven by corporate ag interests who do not want townships to have a say in the siting of large-scale factory farms. These corporate interests want to move all the decision-making powers to state agencies where they have more clout and easier access. We will not let that happen in Minnesota.

We know special interests will always push for weakening our township rights. In fighting for abolition Wendell Phillips said, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” That is as true now as it was in 1852. And that vigilance must be accompanied by action.

Take action and speak up for local democracy and township rights today!

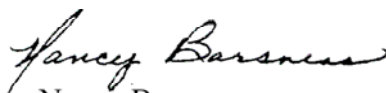
1. Put the enclosed bumper sticker on your vehicle. With over 1,700 townships and nearly 9,000 township officers, let’s make sure legislators and candidates feel our presence. If you want more bumper stickers, give us a call at 612-722-6377 or visit www.landstewardshipproject.org/resources-misc.html.

2. Send the enclosed postcard to let your Senator and Representative know that you support township rights and you do not want them weakened or undermined. This includes the power of townships to enact interim ordinances (temporary moratoriums on major developments). There is room to add a personal note. If you need the name or address of your state Senator or Representative, call us at 612-722-6377.

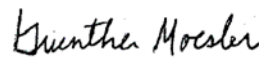
Remember, every member of the State House of Representatives is up for reelection this November. Make sure candidates are asked to discuss how they plan to be supporting township rights.

The Land Stewardship Project remains committed to standing up for township rights and defeating any attempts to weaken local control. It is our grassroots membership that makes us so effective and we invite you to join us today. A basic membership is only \$35 and a membership envelope is enclosed.

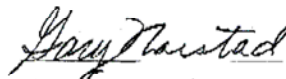
Sincerely as township officers and members of the Land Stewardship Project,



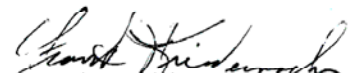
Nancy Barsness
New Prairie Township
Pope County



Guenther Moesler
Randolph Township
Dakota County



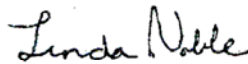
Gary Norstad
Ripley Township
Dodge County



Frank Kreidermacher
Mt. Vernon Township
Winona County



Alan Perish
Hartford Township
Todd County



Linda Noble
Ellington Township
Dodge County



Richard Moudry
West Line Township
Redwood County



David Williams
Preble Township
Fillmore County

— Clerks, please share this information with the township board —

Know your rights. Want more information about using an interim ordinance to promote responsible development in your township? LSP’s manual, *When a Factory Farm Comes to Town: Protecting Your Township from Unwanted Development*, is available for \$8 by calling 612-722-6377, or free online at www.landstewardshipproject.org/pr/06/newsr_060921.htm.