

Auditor opposed dog license fee increase

In 2004, the Montgomery County commissioners voted to increase the cost for a dog license from \$12 to \$14 in 2005 and to \$16 in 2006. As a member of the Animal Resource Advisory Board, I voted not to recommend this increase.

I opposed the fee increase not because the need isn't real or important, because it is. I opposed the increase because at some point someone has to say, "we have had enough." The failure of the Ohio General Assembly to address the state's budget problems responsibly has forced jurisdictions all over Ohio to in effect "nickel and dime" their citizens to the extreme so that those jurisdictions can continue to provide vital public services. In many cases, such as animal control, these are mandated services. Yet, the state has cut its support to local jurisdictions and threatens to make further, even more dramatic cuts next year.

So, how do local jurisdictions respond to these cuts? Here in Montgomery County, there already have been 33 tax levies on the ballot in 2004. Another 20 tax levy requests will appear on the ballot in November.

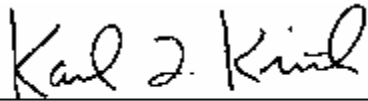
Additionally, cities like Miamisburg and Vandalia have imposed or increased charges for trash collection this year. The Combined Health District raised the fee for copies of birth and death certificates from \$11 to \$16 last July.

As a deputy registrar for motor vehicles, I have seen the charge for passenger car registrations increased in the last year from \$23.25 to \$34.50, and the driver license renewal fee increased from \$11.75 to \$24.

Where does it all stop and when do we say to our legislators in Columbus you cannot continue to force us into making these kinds of choices?

I remember when state government operated under the philosophy of “do more with less.” Now it appears the state wants us all to “do less and take more.” That philosophy is totally unacceptable, and our residents are clearly nearing the end of their ropes. Of the 33 tax levies that have been on the ballot in Montgomery County this year, 23 have been defeated by area voters. There is a message in that, but I’m not sure the members of the General Assembly are getting that message.

As local officials, let us use every opportunity at our disposal to pass this message along to the state legislature. The General Assembly cannot try to solve the state’s budget problems on the backs of local jurisdictions and their residents. We urge continued support of the Local Government Fund, the Local Government Revenue Assistance Fund, and the Library Support Fund at their present levels. And, rather than “do less and take more” we ask our state legislators to do better with what they have.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karl L. Keith". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Karl L. Keith, Montgomery County Auditor