

COUNTY GOVERNMENT REFORM STATEMENT OF RATIONALE

Introductory Statement

- As Ohio's largest, most complex, most urban and most diverse county, Cuyahoga County faces myriad issues significantly different from the majority of counties. The current form of government does not allow this county to successfully address the significant challenges of the 21st Century. A charter county structure would afford both the power and flexibility to address our unique challenges.
- Consistent with the expectations of its citizens, the charter county must be both efficient and effective, and at the same time accountable, responsive, and fairly represented.
- Efficiency and effectiveness dictate that county functions are managed with sufficient professional rigor to ensure sound business practices that maximize county resources and assure fiscal integrity and economic competitiveness.
- Accountability and responsiveness demand a sufficient degree of oversight that links directly to and fosters confidence across the broad and diverse spectrum of the citizens of Cuyahoga County.
- Global competition, deindustrialization of the Great Lakes region, and rampant urbanization have permanently altered Cuyahoga County's landscape, its economy and its population base. County government must be nimble enough to address a complex, changed and rapidly changing environment, as well current and future challenges. In addition, the county must be structured to support and protect its core city, Cleveland, as well as its other municipalities, townships, and villages.
- A reformed county government must be structured to create and maintain:
 - National and Global **Competitiveness**;
 - **Jobs, Growth and Economic Development** across the landscape;
 - **Collaborative Leadership** within the public sector and with the private sector; and
 - **Equity** for all its communities and its citizens.

COMPETITIVENESS

Our county is engaged in a fierce competition for future viability with other regions both national and global. The resurgence and vitality of our ailing economy is directly tied to the competitiveness of Cuyahoga County and its core city, Cleveland.

- Our future ultimately depends upon our county's capacity for leadership in the execution of a competitive economic strategy.
- Success hinges on strengthening and growing our tax and job bases, and thus enhancing the capacity to secure competitive levels of social services, including: health care; quality education; diverse, affordable and quality housing; as well as sustainable cultural and arts institutions, to name a few.
- The ultimate linchpin of competitiveness will be the ability of the County Government to afford decisive leadership in action and collaboration with our core city, Cleveland, and surrounding regional communities.
- These reforms are the key to achieving such a competitive advantage.

JOBS, GROWTH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The diversity and work ethic of our county's citizens, as well as the community and institutional assets of Cuyahoga County and the City of Cleveland, form a formidable basis for future success. Yet, in the midst of the urgent economic difficulty we now face, the creation of jobs, economic development and real economic growth must become fundamental county governmental purposes. Achieving each is a key to competitiveness.

- Decisive leadership for jobs growth and economic development must become a central responsibility of our county government.
- These ends will be accomplished through these specific county government reforms.
- Any county government reforms must be driven by the clear objectives of creating a structure that is a catalyst for meaningfully enhancing economic development and jobs creation.

COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Another rationale for county government reform in Cuyahoga County is to provide a structure that allows greater collaborative leadership and accountability.

- This proposed structure would streamline the existing structure—a structure that no longer meets the needs of a complex urban county that is undergoing a continual economic restructuring.
- These challenges necessitate tools currently not available to county officials.

- The office of the county executive would have sufficient power to attract and nurture aggressive leadership. With a modern executive function in operation, the chain of authority would be simplified in a fashion that quickens response times across the county's administrative apparatus and allows creative problem solving.
- With respect to economic development, the modern charter affords the executive a great deal of management discretion that is necessary to negotiate and execute the various opportunities that arise during the course of government operation that the current statutory framework does not allow.
- The county executive would have the power to negotiate and strategize on behalf of county taxpayers on a level recognizable and respected by CEOs, Labor, mayors, the non profit community, and other partners.
- Public and private sector executives will know the one person to contact to make deals—and they will know whom to hold responsible for their execution.

The proposed election of an executive will hold one person responsible and accountable for the execution of the core county governmental functions. It will be clear where responsibility lies and voters can clearly place either blame or accolades accordingly.

EQUITY

- To ensure a sustainable future, county government must ensure that all communities and the full diversity of its people have mutual voice in the management and distribution of and equitable benefit from county resources.
- County government structure and policies must support a move toward a united community with a shared vision for growth and prosperity. We must therefore focus on creating a climate for economic development and economic opportunity that seeks to eliminate urban-suburban, economic, racial and ethnic disparities.

COUNTY GOVERNMENT REFORMS SERVE THE CORE PRINCIPLE

- Leadership for Competitiveness
- A "one-stop shop" for jobs creation and economic development: a single county executive to decisively lead, be accountable for, and collaborate with Cleveland and surrounding communities;
- A representative county council to approve budget, serve as a forum for debate, and otherwise provide the checks and balances found in most government structures;
- An otherwise streamlined, less bureaucratic, and less costly structure for administering the county's government; and
- An equitable, sustainable future for all.