

## **U.S. METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE: FROM FORMAL STRUCTURE TO THE STATUS QUO?**

### **DISCUSSION POINTS**

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### **The Overall Structure of Government in the United States**

As is clearly shown in Table 1 the structure of government in the US is complex in its mixture having multiple levels --federal, state, and four levels of local government. It is also expansive in the number of governmental jurisdictions presently just slightly fewer than 90,000. The downward change in the number of governments in the fifty-five years between 1952 and 2007 has been considerable (24%). It is even more pronounced if one goes back prior to 1952.

However, the dramatic change has been focused in a decline in school districts (81%) and a sharp growth in the number of special districts (303%).

As an aside it is interesting to note that the total number of jurisdictions exceeded 155,000 in 1942. These numbers highlight the complexity of the US governmental structure. This complexity is exacerbated when one takes into account which governments undertake which functions, who does what?

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**Table 1**  
**Trend in Number of Governments in the United States: 1952 to 2007**

(Source: Census of Governments 2002, Vol.1, No.1, and Census of Governments 2007, *Government Organization*.)

| <b>Government Type</b> | <b>2007</b> | <b>2002</b> | <b>1992</b> | <b>1987</b> | <b>1977</b> | <b>1952</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Total Governments      | 89,476      | 87,576      | 85,006      | 83,237      | 79,913      | 116,805     |
| Federal                | 1           | 1           | 1           | 1           | 1           | 1           |
| State                  | 50          | 50          | 50          | 50          | 50          | 48          |
| <u>Local:</u>          |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| County                 | 3,033       | 3,034       | 3,043       | 3,042       | 3,042       | 3,052       |
| Municipal              | 19,492      | 19,429      | 19,279      | 19,200      | 18,862      | 16,807      |
| Township               | 16,519      | 16,504      | 16,656      | 16,691      | 16,822      | 17,202      |
| School District        | 13,051      | 13,506      | 14,422      | 14,721      | 15,174      | 67,355      |
| Special District       | 37,381      | 35,052      | 31,555      | 29,532      | 25,962      | 12,340      |

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## ***Defining Metropolitan Governance***

**First:** the more traditional definition that emphasizes governmental structure.

**Second:** is advanced by scholars who advocate models that have come to be known as the “New Regionalism” and “public choice.”

These models of governance can be briefly outlined as follows:

- a minimum role for government with emphasis on local cooperation,
- where there is government follow a market, public choice type model,
- governance should be through informal arrangements not formal government with an emphasis on inter-local cooperation,
- private sector service provision is preferred,
- the more local and smaller the better.

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## **Factors Affecting the Adoption of Metropolitan Government and Governance in the US**

### **I. Political Considerations**

- ❖ *American Local Government Ideology*
- ❖ *Movement of Power Away from the Existing Local Political Base*
- ❖ *Constitutional Status of Local Governments*
- ❖ *Political Territorial Imperative*
- ❖ *Constitutional and Legal Status of Local Government*
- ❖ *Lack of State Leadership or Intervention*
- ❖ *State Electoral Structure*
- ❖ *Ease of Incorporation and Annexation*
- ❖ *Race, Class, and the Protection of Enclaves*
- ❖ *The Residential Bias of the American People*
- ❖ *Lack of Federal Leadership*
- ❖ *The Strength of Pro-Sprawl and Pre-Fragmentation*
- ❖ *A Dislike for More Government*
- ❖ *The Difficulty of Implementing a Metropolitan Government:*
- ❖ *Uncertainty*
- ❖ *Local Government Autonomy*

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## **Factors Affecting the Adoption of Metropolitan Government and Governance in the US (cont.)**

### **II. Economic and Financial Considerations**

- ❖ *Protection of Financial Base*
- ❖ *Inter-jurisdictional Economic Competition*
- ❖ *Fear of New Taxes*

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## How to Move Toward Regional Government/Governance

Walker (1987) has provided an outline of types of movement toward regional governance. It is quite exhaustive in its specification and has categories that range from “easiest” to “middling” to “hardest.” It is shown in Table 2.

As might be anticipated the *easiest* types are the ones that have been most widely adopted since they require only a marginal shift from an existing status quo situation.

Some are:

- ❖ informal cooperation,
- ❖ inter–local service agreements,
- ❖ private contracting,
- ❖ extra–territorial powers,
- ❖ regional councils/councils of government,
- ❖ joint powers agreements,
- ❖ cooperative purchasing agreements

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**Table 2**  
**Regional Governance Approaches: Walker's Classification**  
 (Source: Adapted from Walker, 1987.)

| Approach                                              | Summary description                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b><i>Easiest</i></b>                                 | <b><i>Easiest</i></b>                                                                                                              |
| • Informal cooperation                                | Collaborative and reciprocal actions between two local governments                                                                 |
| • Inter–local Service Agreements                      | Voluntary but formal agreements between two or more local governments                                                              |
| • Joint Powers Agreements                             | Agreements between two or more local governments for joint planning, financing, and delivery of a service                          |
| • Extra–territorial Powers                            | Allows a city to exercise some regulatory authority outside of its boundary in rapidly developing unincorporated areas             |
| • Regional Councils/Councils of Government            | Local councils that rely mostly on voluntary efforts and have moved to regional agenda-definer and conflict–resolver roles         |
| • Federally Encouraged Single-Purpose Regional Bodies | Single-purpose regional bodies created when tied to federal funds                                                                  |
| • State Planning and Development Districts            | Established by states in the 1960s and early 1970s to bring order to chaotic creation of federal special purpose regional programs |
| • Contracting (private)                               | Service contracts with private providers.                                                                                          |

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| Table 2 (cont.)<br>Regional Governance Approaches: Walker's Classification<br>(Source: Adapted from Walker, 1987.)                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Summary description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Middling</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Middling</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Special Districts</li> <li>Transfers of Functions</li> <li>Annexation</li> <li>Regional Special Districts and Authorities</li> <li>Metro Multipurpose District</li> <li>Reformed Urban County</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a single service or multiple related services on a multi-jurisdictional basis</li> <li>Shifting of responsibility for provision of a service from one jurisdiction to another</li> <li>Bringing an unincorporated area into an incorporated jurisdiction</li> <li>Region wide districts for providing a service, for example, mass transit or sewage disposal</li> <li>A regional district to provide multiple functions</li> <li>Establishment of a charter county</li> </ul> |
| <small>Donald F. Norris &amp; Don Phares, discussion paper for the <i>Conference on Regional Governance</i>, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, Richmond, BC, May 27-28, 2011.</small>                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

| Table 2 (cont.)<br>Regional Governance Approaches: Walker's Classification<br>(Source: Adapted from Walker, 1987.)                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Approach                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Summary description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Hardest</b>                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Hardest</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One-Tier Consolidation</li> <li>Two-Tier Restructuring</li> <li>Three-Tier Restructuring</li> </ul>                                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consolidation of city and county</li> <li>Division of functions between local and regional</li> <li>Agencies at multiple levels of government that absorb, consolidate, or restructure new and/or existing roles and responsibilities</li> </ul> |
| <small>Donald F. Norris &amp; Don Phares, discussion paper for the <i>Conference on Regional Governance</i>, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, Richmond, BC, May 27-28, 2011.</small> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

The *middling* category is more troublesome in terms of adoption but has been manifest in the use of special districts and to a lesser extent annexations. As was shown in Table 1 special districts have increased by 303% between 1952 and 2007 from 12,340 to 37,381.

The type of special districts that have been authorized varies widely but they all share a common distinction, they deal with a single function. Sometimes they cover multiple counties in a MSA but more often they are limited to a single county area. The types of special districts in existence for 2002 are shown in Table 3 (Census of Governments, *Government Organization 2002*, pp. 13–15).

Walker's *hardest* category is manifest in the US only as one-tier consolidation of city and county. With the exception of Metro Portland the two and three tier consolidation category is a void. Even the presence of a one-tier consolidation approach is limited. Table 4 lists the consolidations that have occurred since 1805, some 204 years. Despite hundreds of referendum proposals, only a paltry thirty-four have been enacted.

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**Table 3**  
Types of Special Districts in the US  
(Source: Census of Governments (2002), *Government Organization*, pp. 13–15.)

| Single Function Districts                | Number (2002) |
|------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Education (not a school district)</b> | <b>518</b>    |
| Libraries                                | 1,580         |
| Hospitals                                | 711           |
| Health                                   | 753           |
| Welfare                                  | 57            |
| Highways                                 | 743           |
| <b>Air transportation</b>                | <b>510</b>    |
| Other transportation                     | 205           |
| <b>Drainage and flood control</b>        | <b>3,247</b>  |
| <b>Soil and water conservation</b>       | <b>2,506</b>  |
| <b>Other natural resource</b>            | <b>1,226</b>  |
| Parks and recreation                     | 1,287         |
| <b>Housing and community development</b> | <b>3,399</b>  |
| Sewerage                                 | 2,004         |
| <b>Solid Waste Management</b>            | <b>455</b>    |
| Water Supply                             | 3,405         |
| Other Utilities                          | 1,161         |
| Fire protection                          | 5,725         |
| Cemeteries                               | 1,666         |
| Industrial development                   | 234           |
| <b>Other single function</b>             | <b>1,161</b>  |

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**Table 3 (cont.)**(Source: Census of Governments (2002), *Government Organization*, pp. 13–15.)

|                                           |               |
|-------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Multifunction Districts</b>            | <b>3,175</b>  |
| Natural resources and water supply        | 102           |
| Sewerage and water supply                 | 1,446         |
| Other multi-function                      | 1,627         |
| <b>Total Special Districts as of 2002</b> | <b>35,052</b> |

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**Table 4**  
**Successful City-County Consolidations**

| Year Approved | Local Jurisdictions Involved, State              | Means Used |
|---------------|--------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1805          | New Orleans, New Orleans Co., LA                 | LA         |
| 1821          | Boston, Suffolk Co., MA                          | LA         |
| 1821          | Nantucket Town, Nantucket Co., MA                | LA         |
| 1854          | Philadelphia, Philadelphia Co., PA               | LA         |
| 1856          | San Francisco, San Francisco CO., CA             | LA         |
| 1874          | New York, New York Co., NY                       | LA         |
| 1898          | New York, Brooklyn, Bronx, Staten Island, Queens | LA         |
| 1904          | Denver, Denver Co., CO                           | LA         |
| 1907          | Honolulu, Honolulu Co., HI                       | LA         |
| 1947          | Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, LA         | REF        |
| 1952          | Hampton, Elizabeth City Co., VA                  | REF        |
| 1958          | Newport News, Warwick Co., VA                    | REF        |
| 1962          | Nashville, Davidson Co., TN                      | REF        |
| 1962          | Virginia Beach, Princess Ann Co., VA             | REF        |
| 1962          | South Norfolk, Norfolk Co., VA                   | REF        |
| 1967          | Jacksonville, Duval, FL                          | REF        |
| 1969          | Carson City, Ormsby Co., NV                      | REF        |

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**Table 4 (cont.)  
Successful City-County Consolidations**

| Year Approved | Local Jurisdictions Involved, State         | Means Used   |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1969          | Indianapolis, Marion Co., IN                | LA           |
| 1969          | Juneau, Greater Juneau Borough, AK          | REF          |
| 1970          | Columbus, Muskeg Co., CA                    | REF          |
| 1971          | Holland/Whaleville Towns, Nansemond Co., VA | REF          |
| 1971          | Sitka, Greater Sitka Borough, AK            | REF          |
| 1972          | Suffolk, Nansemond Co., VA *                | REF          |
| 1974          | Lexington, Fayette Co., KY                  | REF          |
| 1975          | Anchorage, Greater Anchorage Area , AK      | REF          |
| 1977          | Anaconda, Deer Lodge Co., MT                | REF          |
| 1977          | Butte, Silver Bow Co., MT                   | REF          |
| 1984          | Houma, Terrebonne Parish, LA                | REF          |
| 1990          | Athens, Clark Co., GA                       | REF          |
| 1992          | Lafayette, Parish, LA                       | REF          |
| 1995          | Augusta, Richmond Co., GA                   | REF          |
| 1997          | Kansas City, Wyandotte Co., KS              | REF          |
| 1999          | Louisville, Jefferson Co., KY               | REF          |
| 2000          | Hartsville, Trousdale Co., TN               | Not reported |

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### ***Spanning Governance Reform: the St. Louis Metro Area***

#### ***Formal Governance Proposals***

- ❖ *Separation of the City from the County: The “Great Divorce 1876*
- ❖ *Consolidation under City Government: 1926*
- ❖ *A Metropolitan Federation: 1930*
- ❖ *The Metropolitan Sewer District: 1954*
- ❖ *A Metropolitan Transit District: 1955*
- ❖ *A Metropolitan St. Louis District: 1959*
- ❖ *The Borough Plan: 1962*
- ❖ *Major Countywide Reform: 1987*
- ❖ *Major Countywide Reform: 1987*

#### ***Incremental Governance Changes***

Refer to Table 5 below.

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**Table 5**  
**Multi-County Governance in the St. Louis Area: 1954– Present**

Sanitary Waste/Storm Water/Solid Waste

**Metropolitan Sewer District (City of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1954)**  
**St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District** (city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, Jefferson County, St. Charles County) (1991)

Education

**St. Louis Community College District** (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1961)  
*Southwestern Illinois College* (Madison County and St. Clair County) (1985)  
**Cooperating School Districts** (most counties) (1964)

Cultural Institutions and the Arts

**Zoo-Museum District: Zoo, Art Museum, Science Center** (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1971)  
**Zoo-Museum District: Missouri Botanical Garden** (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1983)  
**Zoo-Museum District: Missouri History Museum** (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1987)  
*Regional Arts Commission* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1984)

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Note: The items **highlighted in bold** are formal special districts. The others are various types of agreements or cooperation among the indicated counties. Source: Don Phares (ed.), (2009). *Governing Metropolitan Regions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Jones and Phares, Chapter 5, pp. 92-93.

**Table 5 (cont.)**  
**Multi-County Governance in the St. Louis Area: 1954– Present**

Public Safety

*Major Case Squad* (ten counties) (1965)  
*Regional Justice Information System* (eight counties) (1975)

Transportation

**Bi-State Development Agency/Metro** (city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Clair County) (1950 then expanded in the 1960's)  
*Lambert International Airport* (city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County) (originally City of St. Louis, then representation expanded in the 1980's and 1990's)  
*East West Gateway Council of Governments* (eight counties) (1965)  
*Metropolitan Taxi Commission* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (2003)

Tourism and Sports Venues

*Convention and Visitors Commission* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1984)  
*Edward D Jones Dome* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1990)  
*Busch Stadium III* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (2006)

Parks and Open Space

**Great Rivers Greenway** (city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Charles County) (2000)  
**Metro East Park and Recreation District** (Madison County and St. Clair County) (2000)

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Note: The items **highlighted in bold** are formal special districts. The others are various types of agreements or cooperation among the indicated counties. Source: Don Phares (ed.), (2009). *Governing Metropolitan Regions in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Jones and Phares, Chapter 5, pp. 92-93.

**Table 5.1**  
**Multi-County Governance in the St. Louis Area: 1954–Present**

Health Care for the Indigent

*Regional Medical Center* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1985-1997)

*St. Louis ConnectCare* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1997)

*Regional Health Commission* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (2001)

Economic Development

*St. Louis Enterprise Centers* (city of St. Louis and St. Louis County) (1991)

*Greater St. Louis Economic Development Council* (five counties) (1994)

*Greater St. Louis Regional Empowerment Zone* (city of St. Louis, St. Louis County, St. Clair County) (1998)

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