

CHAPTER ONE

General Provisions

Section 1: PREAMBLE

The amazing strength and creativity of America's government institutions reflects the ability of a free people to create, control and use their freedom for the purpose of self-government. The bedrock foundation of that strength and creativity is responsible and responsive local government. It is to local government--and particularly to county government--that citizens turn for day-to-day government needs. It is to the county that citizens turn for equal protection under the laws guaranteed by other constitutions; to the sheriff, the courts and even to jails. Citizens look to the county for the protection and correction of health, and for help in times of economic crisis. Economic well-being is enhanced by the county's efforts in the fields of transportation, business regulations, planning, public safety, agricultural advice, libraries and the improvement of the environment, through regulation, to prevent overcrowding, excessive noise and traffic.

The ability of county government to respond adequately and effectively to citizens' needs has been seriously hampered and eroded in recent times. With the pre-emption of tax resources by the electorate and higher levels of governments, counties are faced with the dilemma of increasing needs for more and better government and the inability to increase necessary resources to meet those needs. Increasingly, counties have had to seek those resources outside their own borders. Witness the constant battle to have the state meet its financial obligations in legislatively mandated programs. Insufficient funds and the proliferation of state mandates have limited counties' abilities to provide government services. They have also limited the ability of counties to meet problems to the satisfaction of local citizens. They have subtly eroded the strength of American government by restricting local county government from methods of self-reliance and confidence.

At this point in the history of counties, it is essential that the basic role of county government in California be subjected to a re-examination for the purpose of re-establishing the strength and viability of counties as an extension of the state and the foundation of effective local self-government. It is important that counties assert their proper role.

The two major planks of a California County Platform become: 1) to allow county government the fiscal resources which enable it to meet its obligations, and 2) permit counties to again be the primary source of the solution of day-to-day local government problems and to tailor those solutions to the satisfaction of citizens.

This Platform is a statement of general principle and policy direction. It is recognized that when dealing in a fast-changing political arena in a state with many local differences, almost any policy guideline would occasionally require exceptions. Therefore, it is anticipated that both the CSAC Board of Directors and the Executive Committee would support appropriate exceptions in unique situations a findings of compelling special conditions.

It is also recognized that the Platform is incomplete in the sense that it is continually subject to review, analysis, revision and further development. The Platform chapters are arranged in a manner that facilitates additions and amendments without affecting remaining portions.

Section 2: LOCAL CONTROL

The phrase "Local Control" is a substitute for the traditional term of "Home Rule," but has much greater significance. Local Control calls for the recognition of the differences that exist throughout the state and provides that local government should have the flexibility to develop systems by which services are provided and problems are resolved. It calls upon counties to resist externally imposed systems that ignore the differences among them that exist.

Local Control also carries with it some important internal considerations, which must be recognized. Frequently, legislative proposals before the Association have only county-wide or area-wide implications. Not only does Local Control fortify our position that the state must recognize local differences, it also provides that individual counties are free to adopt various alternatives for themselves county that may not be acceptable to other counties--provided that these alternatives are not imposed upon those who do not wish them.

Counties adopt the principle of Local Control, which embodies the following:

1. The principle of Local Control is adopted as the primary policy cornerstone of the CSAC.
2. The Association will strive to assure that all legislative proposals, policies and regulations recognize the differences that exist throughout the state. The Association will strongly resist any externally imposed systems which ignore the reality of statewide differences or which further erode local determination.
3. The Association internally incorporates the principle of Local Control. In matters that are limited to county-wide or area-wide application, except when determined by the CSAC Board of Directors or the Executive Committee or to be matters of the gravest and most far-reaching precedent-setting proportions, counties are free to determine their own solutions to county-wide or area-wide matters.
4. Based upon the principle of Local Control, the Association will firmly support any county or counties seeking to oppose the external imposition of systems upon them, which erode local control.
5. Based upon the principle of Local Control, the Association will firmly support any county or counties seeking to resolve local or area-wide issues through the enactment of legislation or otherwise, providing that the proposal is not contrary to the basic precepts of a strong and viable county government.

Section 3: INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

There are various issues and problems, which transcend the boundaries of political subdivisions. It is considered policy of CSAC, that an understanding of the appropriate levels of governmental responsibility be defined and established in order to promote efficient and effective governance for the citizens of the State of California. Within this context it is essential that the roles of state, regional and local agencies be recognized as distinct and separate. Areas of mutual concern do exist; however, the appropriate role of each agency will vary.

Therefore, counties should adopt the following intergovernmental relationship concepts:

1. The state should establish the context for local planning as those items explicitly adopted as areas of statewide concern by the state Legislature. One measure of statewide significance is the financial commitment authorized by the state Legislature to local government.
2. Counties stand ready to fully implement state-mandated and state-funded programs at the local level. However, there is growing concern that state regulations are overly burdensome, internally inconsistent, too inflexible to meet local concern and generally under-funded. Therefore, CSAC supports the process for state legislative review of administrative regulations giving full recognition to locally adopted programs and plans.
3. Counties recognize that there is a distinction between providing direct public services and solving area-wide problems, and this distinction should be recognized in local government organizations.
4. Counties and cities are encouraged to adopt formal policies which encourage locally initiated systems to solve area-wide problems.

Section 4: EFFICIENCY, ECONOMY AND EFFECTIVENESS

To achieve efficiency, economy and effectiveness, counties advocate the principle of Local Control. Many local services are well suited for the utilization of private contracts. When properly used, private contracts can be an effective method of increasing efficiency and reducing costs.

Therefore the following policies are adopted:

1. CSAC finds that consideration should be given to realigning responsibility for public services among levels of government. However, any realigned program should be accompanied by a funding source that supports the cost of the program.
2. CSAC encourages expanded use of private contracts for the provision of local services in certain justifiable areas as a means of achieving efficiency and economy.