

HOW THE MEDIA SLANTS AN ISSUE

BY: Dusty Rhodes, Hamilton County Auditor

On Sunday morning, July 18, I appeared on Channel 12's "Newsmakers" program to talk about the current County Local Government "Reform" Task Force. During the program as I spoke the program ran a banner at the bottom of the screen identifying me with the phrase "Blocking Government Reform Efforts". That is how the program is labeled on the station's website.

Assuming that most people believe "reform" is good and "blocking" is bad, there was an immediate negative impression before I said a word. There was no banner under proponents of radical changes in County government when they appeared reading "Seeking Bigger County Government".

While program host Dan Hurley personally apologized to me for the loaded terminology it did provide an excellent example how the media can distort an opinion or position on an issue.

Credit those promoting this for appropriating the word "reform", but the kind of structural change they seek is actually bigger government that would turn the County into a second tier Cincinnati-style government and would take away the people's right to elect their county officials.

That might be progress to some but I do not believe a majority prefers a bigger, more intrusive County government that can make additional regulations and add more taxes. That would be the result of this effort if successful.

Mr. Hurley believes that a fundamental, expensive and wide-ranging change in County government is something we need. Concluding the interview he said the County needs this radical change which he called "modernization" to compete with metropolitan governments in Indianapolis and Louisville.

This is the kind of emotional appeal which the big government crowd loves to make. It is not supported by the evidence. The unemployment rate in longtime charter governed Summit County is 11 percent. The unemployment rate in neighboring non-charter (up to now) Cuyahoga County is 9 percent.

Regardless of media bias a bigger county government is *not* "reform". We have an obligation to demand better government. To me that means resisting demands to expand it while recognizing the hidden agenda of the "reform" crowd and their handmaidens in the media.