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Realtors group backs Gaughan's downsizing

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Municipal reformer Kevin Gaughan's current proposal to shrink local governments got support this week from one of the area's largest business associations.

The board of directors of the Buffalo Niagara Association of Realtors, which has more than 3,000 members, passed a unanimous resolution Wednesday to endorse Gaughan's suggestion that every local government eliminate two elected positions.

"Kevin's presentation on the cost of local government is not only eye-opening, it's also an eloquent call for reform," said Dan Locche, government affairs director for the association.

Locche says that a copy of the resolution will be sent to all of Erie County's 25 towns, 16 villages and three cities. The realtors' group noted that Buffalo, Erie County, the Town of Tonawanda and the villages of Lancaster and Depew already have reduced their legislative bodies.

The resolution came in advance of the release of the State Commission on Local Government Efficiency report, which is expected to call for the dissolution or merger of governments, school districts and service districts throughout the state.

Gaughan's study of the situation, posted on his Web site, www.thecost.org, shows that Erie County has more elected officials than any other similarly sized metropolitan area in the nation. Gaughan, who is now in the midst of visiting every city, town and village government in Erie County to present his findings, urges local leaders to reduce their operations to save money in the face of the recession.

"Demand for government downsizing is growing," Gaughan says, "and reducing the number of elected officials is a solution that citizens can accomplish right now."

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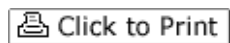
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