

ROCK COUNTY, WISCONSIN



Rock County Board of Supervisors
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September 29, 2008

Senator Robert Jauch
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53702-7882

RE: 10/1/08 Hearing by the Special Committee on Emergency Management and Continuity of Government

Dear Senator Jauch:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written comments to your Special Committee. The topic I wish to bring to your attention is the fiscal constraints placed on local government by state levy limits, and the impact that has on our ability to pay for the response to natural disasters. In particular, I draw from Rock County's experience this summer in response to record flooding that occurred on the Rock River.

I spent numerous hours in the County's Emergency Operations Center in June 2008. During a two week period, I authorized activities costing the county nearly \$300,000 to protect property and lives. That figure is equivalent to 21% of the allowable increase in the 2009 Rock County levy under state imposed limits.

The unpredictable nature of the weather also creates budgetary problems for local government. Recent winters have pushed us over budget for winter maintenance. In 2007, the County was \$800,000 over budget. We are already over budget for 2008 as we look forward to the beginning of the 2008 winter maintenance season.

Budgeting sufficient funds for contingencies is tough enough under normal circumstances. Levy limits make it even more challenging as we attempt to weigh risk and make decisions about allocating limited resources between contingencies and ongoing operations. Please take these comments under advisement in your efforts to understand how to improve local emergency management response to disaster.

Sincerely,

J. Russell Podzilni
County Board Chair

cc: Wisconsin Counties Association