



PERSPECTIVE: WHAT DO OUR TAXES GET US?

Description

By Keith Keck, Justice of the Peace, District 13, Saline County Quorum Court, November 18, 2019

Hot Springs Village residents once again experienced their County/State tax dollars at work when County and State Leaders came together to work on a vital issue for our community. From my time serving on the POA Board to today serving on the Saline County Quorum Court, there has been one frequent question —what does Hot Springs Village receive from all those \$\$\$ we pay for local taxes? As recently as last month when speaking to a group, this question came up...and I answered it with “leverage”.

So let’s look at this most recent [Rural Connect Broadband Grant Program](#) and how this worked.

SITUATION:

The proposed rules for this \$25M Broadband Grant Program excluded all unincorporated areas of Arkansas, like Hot Springs Village and all of western Saline County.

The HSVPOA CEO, Lesley Nalley, and I used this leverage factor to rally our elected officials on relatively short notice. From a Friday afternoon meeting on another subject that turned into an HSV strategy session to overturn this proposed rule, through three days of direct interface with our elected officials, it produced a Wednesday afternoon assault on the unincorporated restriction at the Arkansas Legislature’s Committee on Advanced communications.

Saline County Judge Jeff Arey reworked his schedule to make himself available to testify, so he and I could form a coordinated testimony plan before the Committee. Judge Arey took the overall perspective that the restriction actually violated the meaning of “Rural” in the original act, this negatively impacted his County and how County Government is just as capable to administer these grant funds as any municipality.

My testimony then highlighted the direct impact on western Saline County that this restriction had on

school children, local economic development, recruiting work-from-home professionals and recruiting retirees to a place like Hot Springs Village.

Senator Bill Sample (Committee Member) weighed in heavily on this restriction in his very direct comments on how this negatively impacted over 20,000 residents of Diamondhead and Hot Springs Village and did not meet the "Rural" intention of the legislation.

All these actions laid the groundwork for the final assault on the restriction. Senator Bill Sample directly engaged the State Broadband Manager. Both Judge Arey and I formally submitted written summaries of our Committee remarks to the State Broadband Officials. The HSVPOA Leadership formally objected to the restriction via strongly worded written correspondence to the State Broadband Manager. And finally, YOU, the property owners of HSV flooded the State Broadband office with your comments.

OUTCOME:

Reading the Friday, November 15 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, you can see the positive results this coordinated effort had on removing the grant funding restriction on unincorporated areas, like Hot Springs Village. From the HSVPOA CEO's quick leadership at the initial strategy session...through all the legislative and public comments...a positive step forward for HSV was produced.

MORAL OF THE STORY:

Here in the Village, we may not see the direct impact on our roads or facilities of County/State \$\$\$; however, it is with issues like this that we get our payback. Senator Bill Sample and Saline County Judge Jeff Arey came out swinging over this issue because of all we mean to Saline County and the State of Arkansas.

Out and about in the local area or at some POA function, when you see Bill Sample or Jeff Arey...
SAY 'THANKS' FOR THEIR DEDICATED EFFORTS REPRESENTING THE BEST INTERESTS OF HOT SPRINGS VILLAGE.

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