

FINDINGS OF THE
STUDY COMMISSION

After a study of some 18 months, it is the decision of the Glacier County Study Commission to recommend relatively few changes in the structure of county government. We found the commission form is working well in our predominantly rural and stable county. Future changes will most likely continue to be gradual. County government will most likely continue to function primarily as an administrative arm of the state.

With a population of less than 11,000 (1970 Census) the commission form means government by friends and neighbors. Officials are directly elected and often re-elected, and thus are experienced, long-term public servants. They are native to the community and reflect local attitudes and values. Their administration is characterized by an informal and familiar style. This kind of government contains the flavor of traditional American democracy and should be maintained.

With the adoption of the 1972 constitution and subsequent legislation counties may for the first time be granted legislative powers. They may enact local ordinances. This authority to pass ordinances means an increase in responsibility. The study commission feels this added responsibility should be accompanied by changes to assure responsiveness to the voters.

To this end we are continuing to recommend that all local officials be elected on a partisan basis. There are compelling

arguments for having county officials be elected on a non-partisan basis. However, to maintain interest in the two party system and to create more interest and activity in the election process, partisan elections is being retained.

We recommend three (3) commissioners be nominated and elected for four (4) year overlapping terms from districts in which the candidates must reside. Each commissioner will run "at-large" and be elected by the entire voting electorate of the county. Shortening commissioner terms from six to four years will increase responsiveness.

Historically our commissioner districts have been on an area basis with little consideration of population distribution. Legislation in 1974 requires that the board of county commissioners "shall in every county of the state, following each federal decennial census, divide their respective counties into three commissioner districts as compact and equal in population and area as possible. With the population spread in Glacier County it is conceivable that one portion of the County could dominate all three districts if both equality in area and population are considered. Under voter review legislation we may apportion districts solely on a population basis (our proposal appears hereinafter). We find under the present enumeration districts it is next to impossible to meet the requirements of equality of area and population. The present legislation allows for re-districting based solely upon the criteria of population so long as it is proposed by the County Study Commission and which may be approved by the adoption of the proposed alternative form of government by the voters.

Therefore, we have done the best we can under the limitations of the present enumeration district lines.

We additionally offer voters the option of eliminating the office of superintendent of schools. The number of rural schools has drastically declined. The office of superintendent has changed with the decrease in rural schools. No longer is the task of school supervision a large one. The separate duties of administration/record keeping, finance/budgeting, and appeals/hearings may be better performed by other county offices with specific expertise. The commission feels it is no longer necessary to require election of someone with teaching qualifications and experience to do what has become primarily an administrative job. If voters approve this option duties of the office would be performed as directed by the county commissioners.

Under our proposal we would eliminate the elective office of public administrator, whose principal duty it is to take charge of estates of persons who have no known heirs or for which no other administrator has been appointed. The public administrator must report to, and his activities are supervised by both the District Court and the county treasurer. All estate moneys are deposited with and held by the county treasurer until the court orders disbursement to the heirs or it escheats to the State of Montana. The Study Commission feels few voters have occasion to become acquainted with the office, and elimination would simplify the ballot. The duties of the office would be performed as directed by the county commissioners.

Further under the alternative form offered, the office of surveyor would be eliminated as an elective office. Under the statutes presently existing, great confusion would result if someone ran and qualified for this office. There is question as to whether the Commissioners would retain control over the County road department. To eliminate the office avoids confusion and allows for continued supervision of the County Road Department by the County Commissioners. The office of auditor as an elective office is also eliminated. We have never had such office in this County and no need has been demonstrated.

The changes proposed and the alternative offered, are not radical. Yet it is felt such are needed to make for a better, more responsive and responsible county government.

GLACIER COUNTY STUDY COMMISSION

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The Glacier County Local Government Study Commission having studied our present form of county government and the alternative forms of government available to counties under state law, recommends the following:

1. Glacier County should adopt, effective May 2, 1977, the Commission alternative form of government. Election of all county officials would be on a partisan ballot. The commission would continue to consist of three (3) members, nominated from districts in which candidates must reside but whom are elected by vote of all eligible electors in the county. Commissioner terms would be shortened from six (6) to four (4) years.
2. The question of elimination of the office of county superintendent of schools as a separate elective office shall be submitted to the voters of the county as a sub-option as authorized in 47 A-3-205 R.C.M. 1947.
3. The present offices of surveyor, public administrator, and auditor would not be included in this form of government as separate elective offices.
4. The question of the form of government and the sub-options shall be submitted to the voters of Glacier County on November 2, 1976. The form of the ballot provisions are set forth in this advertisement.

**COMPARISON OF
EXISTING FORM OF GOVERNMENT AND
PROPOSED FORM OF GOVERNMENT**

Characteristics	Present Form of Government	Proposed Form of Government	Comments
Form of Government	Commission Form: Merges legislative, administrative and executive functions in commission.	NO CHANGE	Commission form works well in small, stable counties.
Powers	General government powers: State law defines what government may do and how it shall be done.	NO CHANGE	New constitution grants all counties more flexibility.
Governing Body Size	3 commissioners nominated by districts, elected at-large.	NO CHANGE	District representation assures viewpoints from all sections.
Election	Partisan	Non-partisan	
Presiding officer	Chairman elected from own members.	NO CHANGE	
Term	6 year overlapping terms	4 year overlapping terms.	Shorter terms would assure greater responsiveness to voters.
Duties	Commission is responsible for executive and many administrative functions. Administrative powers shared with other elected officials.	NO CHANGE	
Other Elected Officials	Nine (9) separate elected officials: Clerk & Recorder County Attorney Treasurer Coroner Sheriff Assessor Superintendent of Schools Clerk of Court Public Administrator	Voters offered option of eliminating offices of Public Administrator, Superintendent of Schools, and Surveyor, and prohibit the creation of the office of Auditor	Separate offices no longer necessary to accomplish duties.
Appointive Powers	Commission appoints department heads not elected, members of boards, commissions, special districts.	NO CHANGE	
Budget Preparation	Clerk & Recorder prepares budget with officials and departments. Modified and/or approved by Commission.	NO CHANGE	
Service Delivery Structure	Performed by elected offices and appointed boards, commissions and special districts.	NO CHANGE	
Citizen Participation Community Councils	Form permits authorization of community councils by ordinance to advise commissioners.	NO CHANGE	

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