

**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**  
**President's Message | John Kistler | MARCH 2014**

"A house divided against itself cannot stand." Abraham Lincoln, 1858

Our federal government in Washington, DC is broken. This phrase is continuously repeated.

Both Congress and the President share historically low approval ratings. Public polling surveys show that the primary reason for these poor numbers is that the American people no longer feel their elected officials can work together.

This is not an entirely new problem for our republic. The Founding Fathers understood that having politicians represent such geographically and demographically diverse states and districts would inherently lead to widely differing views. The fact that our Constitution does not lay out a way in which elected officials are meant to operate when it comes to clearly reaching agreement on key policy issues is a testament to their belief that freedom and personal liberties were too vitally important to be restrained by our founding document. Our great country was formed by those who felt strongly that core beliefs and principles had been worth fighting for, and no one, elected or otherwise, should be forced to vote against those values they held so dearly.

However, today's federal government is not what our founders envisioned over 200 years ago. Not every policy battle need turn into a war. All too often now it seems as if winning at every turn has been put above good governance. Compromise of any kind is now frowned upon in Washington and the country as a whole is increasingly more divided. Righting this ship from the grass-roots level up seems to be the most viable solution available today.

Unfortunately this polarization has recently found its way into even our local political discussion. No longer is the good of the entire community at large the issue, but rather an attempt is being made to shift the focus to whether our County or our City governments are benefiting more from the political issue of the day. We at the Taxpayers' Association have always felt that it is all our residents who should be the ones benefiting from the work of the officials elected to serve them and we will continue to be vigilant in looking out for them in that regard.

This ongoing debate is why our first two featured monthly guests this year were Jim O'Connor, Vero Beach City Manager and Joe Baird, Indian River County Administrator. To their credit, both men expressed the desire to find more ways to operate efficiently together and we applaud them both for those efforts. We fully appreciate the rich, storied histories of all the cities within our county and recognize the importance for them to remain fully independent. At the same time we hope they will all continue to look for ways to deliver the essential governmental services required in a manner that keeps the tax burden as low as possible for all citizens. Continuing to find ways in which they and the County can streamline costs together is an important step in the right direction.

On that note of lowering the financial burden for all our residents, we would like to recognize our Board of County Commissioners for eliminating the water and sewer equalization charge in Sebastian. This proposal was brought forth by Commissioner Bob Solari and passed by the Commissioners' last week. When the County took over Sebastian's water and sewer system in 1995 it had imposed a 6% equalization charge. Since that time over 10,000 new Sebastian accounts have been added and hook-up charges and impact fees paid in addition to their monthly rates. While the County has the power to continue charging the fee, we are glad to see them relieve the Sebastian customers of over \$200,000 a year. Capitalized over the next 20 years, that is a savings of over 4 million dollars for our north county neighbors and exactly the type of cost cutting between our County and Cities that we hope will continue in the future.

As an optimist I sincerely hope our locally elected public officials will continue to look out for our entire community's best interests. As a realist also, I can assure you the Taxpayers' Association will continue to do so. The residents of Indian River County deserve nothing less.

Thank You,

John Kistler