



LION

The Wisconsin Land Information Officers Network

Issue Brief

LION Legislative Proposal 2012

December 6, 2012

In May of 2012 the LION membership voted on a legislative proposal, to secure the Wisconsin Land Information Program (WLIP) funds, further advance the program and work towards a more comprehensive reform of the statutes related to it. Since then, LION has been working with the Wisconsin Land Information Association (WLIA), Department of Administration (DOA), the Governor's Office and Wisconsin Register of Deeds Association (WRDA) to this end. In working with these groups the LION proposal has become two separate but related items. This document explains the two items and the work that has been done to date.

Issue 1 - Base Budget and Education Grants:

To enhance the resources needed to provide these vital services, LION, together with WLIA, has been working with the Governor's office and DOA on two revenue-neutral changes to the program in the 2013-2015 Budget. The first change is an increasing the Training and Education grant amount from \$300 to \$1,000 per county. This would provide all counties greater ability to take training classes, seminars or other education opportunities to enrich staff skills to support and maintain the systems and data developed through the WLIP. The second change is to raise the eligibility level of Base Budget Grants from \$50,000, to \$100,000. This change would better address the great disparity of funding, from recording fees, by allowing more counties to qualify for WLIP grants. Increasing the number of counties which are eligible for this grant funding would enhance the development of essential land information for those counties with access to few resources.

LION Legislative Proposal Outline - 2012

I. Education Grant

- A. Change 16.967(7)(b) to increase education and training grant from \$300 to \$1,000 per county.

II. Base Budget Grant

- A. Increase based budget funding to \$100,000 per eligible county.
- B. Establish funding in statues, like education grants are currently sited.

These changes would be revenue-neutral because the program increases would come out of the revenue collected from recording fees that currently goes into the WLIP program. We are not requesting additional revenue sources above and beyond what is collected from this program. With your support, these changes will protect the integrity of the WLIP along with providing all counties with the means to develop land information products & services essential to adjacent counties, state agencies, emergency response personnel, realtors, appraisers, businesses, and many others. With budgets tight and continual lapses to this account it is essential that this funding is safeguarded for its intended purpose.

Issue 2 - \$5 Redaction Fee Sunset:

With the increases to the Base Budget and Education grants there remains a need for funding to accomplish goals of the WLIP. The \$5 Redaction fee provided funding to make Social Security numbers,

from electronic format records, not reviewable or accessible on the Internet. This was a necessary effort to secure personally identifiable information in the modernization of land records. However, the sunset of this funding did not take into account the additional needs of the WLIP. The recording of a document has a ripple effect that impacts a number of departments and ultimately the interaction with the public and private companies. It is the first step in a process that establishes a chain of title and is a record that is reference to time and time again. Also, it is the basis for the development of value added information that goes far beyond a scan image.

The LION proposal would ask for the end of the Redaction Fee sunset. The proposal identified that \$1 of the \$5 would go to the WLIP, increasing the amount from \$2 to \$3. This would support for the Base Budget grants, Education grants and allow for funding of other grants already in statute. The \$4 of the \$5 would be retained in the counties Land Information account, governed by the Land Information Councils. The Land Information Councils were established by Act 314-2009 and oversee the LIO and its budget. The increase in funding would be intended for a number of specific efforts that include, the development, maintenance and enhancement of PLSS monumentation and data, Register of Deeds system enhancements, and integration efforts to support statewide data development. This would provide guidance to the Land Councils in each county and allow them to focus funding to projects as needed in their annual budget process.

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III. Maintain Recording Fee at \$30

- A. Remove redaction fee sunset in 59.43 and place \$5 to Land Information funds.
- B. Update current statutory language so that upon completion or redaction efforts, the county would report to DOA the \$15 fee recording.
- C. \$3 of the \$15 – to the WLIP fund to support Base Budget Grants, Education & Training Grants, and other grant initiatives.
- D. The County Land Information Office shall retain \$12 of the \$15, governed by the Land Information Councils. The increase in funding is intended for the following:
 1. Development, maintenance and enhancement of PLSS monumentation and data.
 2. Register of Deeds system enhancement.
 3. Integration efforts to support statewide data development.

LION sees these changes as also revenue-neutral because the program increases would come out of the revenue collected from recording fees that currently goes into the WLIP program. LION understands that some counties have ended the collection of the \$5 fee, but the majority of the counties will be collecting the fee thru 2014. Thus, we are not requesting additional revenue sources above and beyond what is collected from this program.

LION is in contact with the WDRA, Wisconsin Counties Association and Wisconsin Realtors Association and has a meeting scheduled for December 13th. LION is open to refining the proposal to develop a legislative proposal that meetings the needs of these groups and assure that the funding support the enhancement and advancement of the land record modernization in the State of Wisconsin.