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**MUNICIPAL LEAGUE  
OF METRO ST. LOUIS**

LINKING LOCAL COMMUNITIES | STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q. Do we need a statewide vote to change the government structure in St. Louis?**

A. No. The Missouri Constitution provides a process for voters in St. Louis to determine their own self governance through the creation of a Board of Freeholders/Electors. There is currently a petition process underway to establish this.

### **Q: Why is Better Together seeking a statewide vote on their proposal?**

A. Better Together has concocted a ruse to draw votes from outstate because they know City and County residents overwhelmingly oppose this. We are petitioning for a Board of Freeholders to put this in the hands of local voters only. The Better Together proposal is not democratic and quashes our principle of self-rule.

### **Q. If Better Together's plan passes, what happens to my city?**

A. Your police department is abolished and police property, paid for by taxpayers, is confiscated by Metro City St. Louis, the new mega city. You lose all your zoning power. You lose your public works department as the new Metro City is now responsible for public works services (ex. snow plowing) for all 1.3 million residents. You lose all your local sales tax revenue approved by local voters and your community will have to pass additional property taxes to offset shortfalls in revenue to maintain local parks, provide trash service and fire service. There will be no local control over future developments in your community. Your city essentially becomes a homeowners' association and the new center of government will be in downtown St. Louis.

**Q. We are told that if we don't vote for this, everyone statewide will become financially responsible for a likely default by The City of St. Louis. Is that true?**

A. No, Missouri State Statute exempts the State from any liability for municipalities that become insolvent or are unable to repay obligations.

**Q. Better Together points to Nashville and Indianapolis as cities where this has worked. Is that true?**

A. No, no other city or region in America has had a statewide vote to force a local merger. Never. In both examples (Nashville & Louisville), the City and County governments were merged and all the local governments were left alone. Today, 16 years post-merger, Louisville has more municipalities than we currently have in Saint Louis County. And the "savings" espoused by Better Together in other cities simply have not materialized. It's a hoax.

**Q. What happens to the city employees we know?**

A. Many are already leaving. They are afraid for their families' financial futures. We have a "brain drain" already occurring. Very competent municipal employees are leaving in fear. In the first phase, municipalities will lose 3,500 employees. These are the people you know who protect you, clear your snow and come to your service. It's a job loss for our region.

**Q. Better Together says the municipal opposition is all about "fiefdoms" protecting their territory and jobs. True?**

A. Absolutely not. The vast majority of our municipalities are efficient, have high standards and run well. Our residents like their cities and are comfortable. Are improvements possible? Yes, and we are working on that. But, the "fiefdom" claims are made by corporate chieftains, with no political experience, trying to tell all of us what our communities should be. They don't ask, they dictate.

**Q. Who is Better Together?**

A. Rex Sinquefeld is a billionaire who is funding this with \$25 million of personal political money to get his way. He has hired countless, expensive consultants. He has also done this on Lambert Airport privatization and many other issues to ensure he gets what he wants. He has paid for the mayor of the City of St. Louis and the County Executive.

**Q. We need to “do something.” St. Louis is declining. What’s your plan?**

A. We have been doing something and we will do more. Cities in the County have been collaborating and consolidating for several years. From police in North County and 24:1, emergency dispatching, purchasing and best practices, changes are happening. Unlike the City of St. Louis and the County, many of our cities have professionally trained managers. Under the Better Together proposal, two un-elected politicians—the County Executive and the Mayor of St. Louis—would design the next regional charter. You will have no say in that.

We have proposed a Board of Freeholders to review the entire system to bring forward a plan for voters in The City of St. Louis and the County only. Ideas that we should be talking about:

1. The City reentering the County as a municipality.
2. The merging of St. Louis City and County Police Departments. (It’s the only way to fix the statistical stigma of being the murder capital of the United States)
3. Establishing a city manager form of government for the City and County so the City/County governments aren’t run by politicians.
4. Continue court reform by working with State judicial authorities.

**Q. Are there financial savings for residents with the Better Together plan?**

A. There is no empirical data from other mergers showing significant savings. The Missouri State Auditor’s fiscal note said that there could be an \$80 million deficit or up to a billion dollars in savings.

**Q. Will there be changes in service levels with the Metro City government?**

A. Yes. Better Together proposes removing \$250 million from the revenue stream the first year which is currently used to provide services. As a service industry, up to 5,000 jobs could be eliminated in the first year. All services will be reduced in effort to equalize to the lowest common denominator. If a municipality would like to raise their level of services to their previous quality, residents may pass a personal property tax to pay the difference.

**Q. How does Metro City decision making differ from local decision making?**

A. The new Metro City will be governed by a Metro Mayor and a 33-member Metro Council. Important local decisions regarding police service, public works, municipal courts, and planning and zoning will be made by the Metro Council. Each Metro Councilmember will represent 40,000 residents. Currently, these decisions are made by locally elected officials. The Metro Council limits access for residents to participate in the government process.

**Q. Where do I read the entire text amendment?**

A. [Better Together Task Force Report](#). Then read the [Governance Analysis](#) by Terry Jones to help fully understand what is being proposed.

**Q. How is the new charter determined?**

A. The new Metro Mayor and Deputy Mayor will develop a new charter and it is deemed adopted unless *disapproved* by a 2/3 vote of the Metro Council.

**Q. Where can I sign the Board of Freeholder petition?**

A. There are 3 ways to sign a petition:

1. Contact your local elected officials and ask where you can sign the petition.

2. Circulate a petition for your friends, family, neighbors and/or organization. Here are the instructions:

<http://www.stlmuni.org/board-of-freeholders/>

3. Sign the petition at the Municipal League Office:

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