



Indiana Association of Cities and Towns

Your Partner in Good Government

Municipal Government Week: May 11-15, 2009

Municipal Government Week (MGW) is presented by the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns to increase public awareness about municipal government. Gov. Mitch Daniels has issued a proclamation declaring **May 11-15, 2009**, as Municipal Government Week in Indiana. Cities and towns are encouraged to pass a local resolution and to implement programs that educate local citizens about the functions and benefits of municipal government.

Groups to involve in MGW include citizens, local businesses, legislators and students. Let IACT know about your community's plans by completing the Event Planning Form by April 24 and the Activity Summary Form when the event is complete. Begin by planning your events and notifying the media and public.

How to begin

To ensure good participation in your community, it will be important to market the activities you have planned for MGW. Here are a few ideas to help you get started.

- Place an advertisement in the local newspaper proclaiming May 11-15 as Municipal Government Week. Talk to your local media about being a MGW sponsor and running the ad(s) at reduced or no cost to you.
- Prepare banners or large signs announcing MGW and post outside city/town hall, along main thoroughfares or at main entrances to the city/town.
- Ask service clubs such as Lions, Kiwanis, Optimists, Rotary, etc. to meet at your city/town hall during MGW.
- Develop a handout or flyer describing reasons why citizens of your community should be proud to reside there.
- Encourage senior citizen, school and service groups to tour city/town hall. Have a staff member or elected official(s) present to answer questions.
- Ask local businesses to provide "freebies" or discount coupons to give away during tours or other events.
- Distribute flyers to local schools for children to take home describing the purpose of MGW and the events that are planned. Encourage children to bring parents/guardians to events.

- Insert information about MGW in utility bills.
- Advertise MGW using a local billboard.
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper that highlights activities and why municipal government is important. Ask to have it printed during MGW.
- Send news releases and public service announcements to the local media notifying them of your planned events and encouraging their participation.
- Establish a MGW committee. Appoint citizens to help in the planning of events. They will encourage attendance when they feel some ownership in the project.

Involve the public

A major initiative of elected officials is to maintain a high quality of life in their communities. Citizens are your greatest natural resource, so keeping them informed is an essential part of your job. Use MGW activities to show citizens what their municipal government does for them, and communicate that their interests matter to you.

- Distribute a fact sheet outlining the role of municipal government.
- Place city/town equipment and replacement parts on display and attach the year and purchase price.
- Invite the public to tour outside municipal facilities (wastewater treatment plant, fire station, police station, etc.).
- Sponsor an open house for the community. Invite municipal employees to be on hand to greet visitors and talk about their jobs.
- Host a question and answer session with local officials for citizens. Be sure to notify the media.
- Highlight major projects, new programs and all efforts by the city/town to save taxpayers money.
- Prepare a proclamation to declare May 11-15 as Municipal Government Week
- Plan an official ceremony to honor a past or present municipal official, employee or community volunteer who has demonstrated outstanding dedication to local government and has made significant contributions to the city/town.

Involve local businesses

Local businesses generate a tremendous impact in your community. Not only do they employ your citizens, but they pay taxes which helps enhance the quality of life in your municipality. Encouraging businesses to participate will help them feel more involved in the community.

- Ask local businesses to sponsor essay or art contests.
- Send a special invitation to business/chamber of commerce leaders encouraging their participation and inviting them to MGW events.
- Host a breakfast with the mayor/council for local business owners to kick off MGW. You can also combine this event with a fund-raiser for a local service organization.
- Ask businesses to provide free giveaways for events. This is also a good way for them to promote their business.

- Ask local realtors for assistance - they have a stake in building a strong community.
- Give special recognition to businesses at council meetings.
- Present an award at a council meeting to local businesses that are supportive of your efforts.
- Develop a fact sheet for businesses that outlines “What we have done for you lately.”
- Write an article for local businesses’ employee newsletters.
- Arrange for citizens to tour facilities that have taken advantage of tax abatement or TIF districts. This will help citizens understand why these incentives are a positive economic development tool to use.
- Offer space for booth/table displays during tours of the city/town hall. Be sure to notify the media and include this in your advertisements.

Involve your legislators

State and federal lawmakers have a tremendous impact on local government. Your state lawmakers pass laws concerning how cities and towns in Indiana are governed, and educating them about municipal government helps them and local officials create a stronger state.

- Invite your state and federal legislators to all MGW activities.
- Offer them a visible role at all events.
- Ask them to be available to meet citizens at city/town hall.
- Have legislators explain what they are doing for your community. Ask them to report on newly enacted legislation that impacts your municipality.
- Present an award to your legislators if they have been particularly helpful to your community’s interests.
- Invite legislators to serve as judges of civic contests - essay/art, etc.

Involve students

Students are citizens and future taxpayers, voters and elected officials. Educating students about the benefits of living in your community will encourage them to stay or return to your municipality after completing higher education, and become productive citizens. By beginning early, you will have a tremendous impact on their perception of government.

- Encourage municipal leaders to speak in local classrooms.
- Compose a letter explaining the importance of municipal government and community involvement from the mayor, council president or clerk-treasurer to be read in classrooms.
- Initiate a community-wide art or essay contest which supports community involvement or unity. Display the entries in the municipal building.
- Ask teachers to encourage students to attend council meetings and write about them. Arrange for a local official to address the class in school the following day to answer any questions.

- Hold a mock council meeting before a school assembly showing an ordinance being debated and adopted, or a budget being formulated. Use real council members or a mix of members and students.
- Contact your local library and advise them of the week's activities. Ask them to showcase books about municipal government.
- Create a quiz about your municipality or local government and distribute it to classrooms.
- Invite students to take a field trip visiting municipal projects, wastewater treatment plants or other points of interest.
- Arrange for a school-sponsored clean-up day. Have students help clean up local parks and recreation areas.

References and Resources

General Media and Public Relations Tips

Following MGW, IACT would appreciate receiving copies of any printed materials or news articles related to your community's events, and a summary of your city's/town's activities.

- Remember to include your local media in communication efforts. This is also an excellent opportunity to build a strong relationship with your local media.
- Plan in advance for local media coverage. Prepare a news release focusing on your activities.
- Encourage the local newspaper to start a series on different aspects of municipal government.
- Contact the local radio/television station(s) and schedule a session on a local call-in or public interest show.
- Schedule meetings with the editorial board members or staff of your local newspapers to discuss the significance of MGW.
- Discuss the idea of running public service announcements on your local radio stations.



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Cities and Towns
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Municipal Government Week, 2009 Event Planning Form

Municipality: _____

Contact: _____ **Title:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

Event Date: _____ **Event Time:** _____

Event Location: _____

Event Description: _____

Please forward completed form to Sue Whitaker by April 24.
Email: swhitaker@citiesandtowns.org
Fax: (317) 237-6206
Mail: 200 S. Meridian St., Ste. 340, Indianapolis, IN 46225

**Events will be featured in the Municipal Government Week
wrap-up edition of *Actionlines*.**

Sample Press Release

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

[date]

Contact [name and phone number]

["city/town slogan"]

Municipal Government Week Proclaimed May 11-15

[Your city/town] – At the request of the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, the official voice of municipal government in Indiana, Gov. Mitch Daniels has issued a proclamation declaring May 11-15, 2009, as Municipal Government Week in Indiana.

Local officials in **[your city/town]** join city and town leaders statewide in an effort to increase public awareness about municipal government in Indiana communities.

“This week’s community activities are geared toward educating the citizens of **[your city/town]** about the functions and benefits of local government,” stated **[local elected official]**.

[Your city/town] has scheduled special events and activities to encourage local citizens, businesses, legislators and students to become involved with the local government process. **[List specific activities you have planned in your community with dates, times and locations for all.]**

A Resolution Concerning Municipal Government Week

- WHEREAS, **(your city/town)** was incorporated in **(year founded)** with the intention of meeting the needs of the **(city/town)** citizens; and
- WHEREAS, municipal government is the closest form of government to the people and is best able to meet the people's needs; and
- WHEREAS, in order to thrive, it is vital to a city or town to foster understanding between local officials and the citizens which it serves; and
- WHEREAS, municipal government officials play a key role in the democratic process in America; and
- WHEREAS, Municipal Government Week is an important time to recognize the critical role played by municipal government in our lives; and
- WHEREAS, this week offers an important opportunity to spread the word to all the citizens of Indiana that they can shape and influence this branch of government which is closest to the people; and
- WHEREAS, municipal government provides the essential public services on which Hoosiers rely;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the **(insert your appropriate verbiage)** that **(city/town)** does hereby participate in Municipal Government Week with the passage of this resolution; and the elected officials plan to further participate by **(list some of the week's activities)**.

Sample Public Service Announcements

Please distribute public service announcement scripts (PSAs) and news releases to your local radio stations. All PSAs should be submitted in writing to the Public Service/Public Affairs Director at each radio station. Radio stations are required to air PSAs each week. However, individual radio stations maintain discretion for the number of times your PSA is played. Not all PSA requests are aired.

20-second spot

Do you know how your city or town runs? Take time during Municipal Government Week, May 11-15, to think about the people who help maintain your community. Cities and towns in Indiana are served by hard-working, dedicated municipal personnel. This message is brought to you by the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns.

20-second spot

Did you know that your city or town receives only about 16 cents **(or insert local figures here)** of each property tax dollar? This message is brought to you by the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, reminding you that May 11-15 is Municipal Government Week.

30-second spot

If you wake up in the middle of the night to the smell of smoke, would you call the Governor? If your car gets stolen, would you call your Congressman? If your street needs repaired, would you call your State Senator? No, you would call your city or town for these essential services. This week celebrates Municipal Government Week, and the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns encourages you to participate in local government.

60-second spot

Do you complain about higher property taxes? Ever wonder why your municipal officials say they've held the line on property taxes, yet your bill still increases? It's because municipal government is only one of six levels of government competing for a piece of your property tax dollar. And, each level has its own separate officials. Municipal government receives only a small amount of each dollar, yet provides us the basic services we take for granted—like maintaining city streets, police and fire protection, and running tap water for our homes. These are all services brought to you by your city or town. Take time this week—Municipal Government Week—to learn about YOUR government.



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Municipal Government Week, 2009 Activity Summary Sheet

Municipality: _____

Contact: _____ **Title:** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

**Our city/town participated in Municipal Government Week by
conducting the following activities:**

Please forward completed form to Sue Whitaker following MGW.

Email: swhitaker@citiesandtowns.org

Fax: (317) 237-6206

Mail: 200 S. Meridian St., Ste. 340, Indianapolis, IN 46225

**Events will be featured in a Municipal Government Week wrap-up article
that will appear in the *Actionlines*.**

Please include any supporting materials with this form.