

TOPIC:

Building Moratoria
(Presented July 2007, Approved July 2007)

POLICY:

Placing moratoria to suspend new development is the most draconian of governmental actions in the land development review system. Because they take place outside of procedural due process, moratoria are susceptible to tremendous potential abuse by a locality. Therefore, LVBA opposes granting power to municipalities to impose building moratoria.

BACKGROUND

Proper land planning will sustain a higher quality of life – both economically and environmentally – for the community. But, in order to affect good planning, local governments require the necessary technical and financial resources to examine and restructure their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. And, often municipalities are under equipped with human and financial resources to create & maintain up to date comprehensive plans & ordinances.

Providing planning grants and technical expertise to challenged townships will help them cope – in a real way – with local development pressures far more effectively than the knee-jerk reaction of calling for a “time out”. A “time out”, incidentally, that will still leave the municipality without proper resources to develop sound land use planning.

Historically, counties that offer municipal governments incentives in the form of grants and technical guidance have experienced a greater percentage of localities that amend and update their comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances.

The argument most frequently advanced by those favoring legislation to authorize municipal building moratoria, is that municipalities need this tool to halt the flow of new applicants while they update their land use ordinances.

However, development moratoria offer no guarantee that townships will substantially rewrite their comprehensive plans, or change their zoning ordinances. And, they do not guarantee to bring about long-term solutions to managing growth.

Additionally, building moratoria on residential and commercial development cannot solve the short-term problems associated with “growing pains”. Moratoria will, however, pose serious, long-term consequences to the local economy.

Housing is Pennsylvania’s third largest industry and is our state’s ninth largest employer providing jobs to over 230,000 families. Shutting down this economic engine will do

nothing to help achieve a higher quality of life and a brighter financial outlook for our residents. To the contrary, it will send shock waves throughout an already shaky economy.

#