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Facing Reality--and Changing it! Press Release on Legal Obstacles

Dayton Together

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Facing Reality---and Changing It!

This week, Dayton Together announced that because of a legal obstacle that cannot be overcome, it scrapped its proposal that some local governments, including Dayton, consider merging.

This private group of citizens was created to build awareness about some very troubling data that shows our ability to remain a viable community into the future is very much at risk if we don't change *something* and to focus the community's attention to solve the challenge.

We thought one way to do that was to propose a merger of Montgomery County and its largest city, Dayton. We listened and we learned. We were wrong about the solution. But we ARE asking some of the right questions.

The premise of why Dayton Together formed remains as accurate and vital today as ever.

The economic and population trends are disturbing. It is crucial that we work together to reverse them--for all of our sakes---regardless of where in Montgomery County one lives. Such as:

POPULATION LOSS

- Since 1970, Dayton has lost more than 100,000 residents. They didn't just move to the suburbs. More than 70,000 people have moved out of Montgomery County in that time.
- Ohio's population grew over 8% during this period; our county's population declined 12%.
- According to official state estimates, we will lose another 55,000 residents by 2040, to 480,000.

LOSS OF INCOME

- Median-family income in Dayton has increased only \$2000 over the last 45 years!
- Montgomery County residents have done better, *BUT here's the most important fact to focus on*---Since the 2008 Recession, average weekly earnings in the Dayton area are way down compared to the nation, to Ohio and to Cincinnati. We are losing ground.

THE PERFECT STORM: Less state& federal support---more local tax levies

- A shrinking population, an eroding tax base caused by the Great Recession, and the loss of state and federal dollars: for Montgomery County, this is a perfect storm. As a result, many local governments have cut services and raised taxes and fees.

- Montgomery County residents now pay the **second highest property tax rate** in Ohio, just behind Cuyahoga County. This is unsustainable. And unless we act soon, these trends may lead to more cutbacks, higher taxes, and prevent us from determining our own future.

That's the bad news. The good news is that we can do something about it. We can reverse these negative numbers by combining our strengths and building for the future.

As a community of 32 local governments, we must find ways to better compete with other regions for new jobs for our citizens. Our future prosperity depends on good jobs. The more jobs we can create and attract, the greater the tax base for our area. That also increases our citizens' quality of life with salaries and benefits for them and their families.

Employers want to locate in communities where people want to live---where the cost of living is low and the quality of life is high.

Instead of all local jurisdictions competing against one another for jobs, we could work together and develop one economic development strategy and one "touchpoint" team for employers looking to relocate here and to help grow existing employers.

We do not pretend to know the answers---or even all the right questions to ask---but we are sure of two things: Montgomery County and its suburban communities cannot prosper unless the core city of Dayton is thriving; and, that we will continue to fall behind other regions unless our community has the courage to embrace this conversation and change its way of doing business to better compete for new jobs and new residents.