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November



Local Government Matters!!

Layers of Government



Why Your Local Government Matters More Than You Think

When you turn on the news, you're almost guaranteed to hear about the President, Congress, or the Supreme Court. National politics are dramatic, widely covered, and feel momentous. But which level of government has a more direct, immediate, and tangible impact on your day-to-day life?

In many cases, it's not the one in Washington, D.C. While the federal government handles "big picture" issues, your local government—your city council, school board, mayor, township trustees, and county commissioners—dictates the quality of your daily life. Understanding the difference is a critical part of being an empowered citizen.

The National View: The 30,000-Foot Level

The national (or federal) government is designed to manage issues that affect the entire country. Its responsibilities are broad and often feel distant, but they form the framework of our nation.

Key responsibilities include:

- * National Defense: Funding and operating the military.
- * Foreign Policy: Making treaties, managing diplomatic relations, and regulating international trade.
- * The Economy: Printing money, setting interest rates, and managing national debt.
- * National Laws: Creating and enforcing laws that apply to all citizens, such as federal civil rights, immigration, and interstate commerce.
- * Social Programs: Running large-scale programs like Social Security and Medicare.

In short, the national government sets the overall conditions for the country—like the weather system for an entire region.

The Local View: Your Front Yard

If the national government is the weather, local government is the sidewalk you walk on, the house you live in, and the park where your kids play. Its impact is direct and personal.

Local government decisions determine:

- * Your Safety: Who shows up when you call 911? Local government funds, trains, and manages your local police department, firefighters, and emergency medical services (EMS).
- * Your Commute: That pothole you hit every morning? The timing of the traffic lights? The routes for the city bus? That's all managed by your local public works and transportation departments.
- * Your Children's Education: Your local school board makes critical decisions on school funding (from property taxes), hiring the superintendent, setting the school calendar, and approving curriculum.
- * Your Home and Neighborhood: Zoning laws, passed by your city council or county commission, dictate exactly what can be built where. This determines if a new apartment complex, a gas station, or a new park can be built at the end of your street.
- * Your Utilities and Services: Local government is typically responsible for ensuring you have clean water, functional sewers, and reliable trash and recycling pickup.
- * Your Community: The quality of your local libraries, the upkeep of public parks, and the availability of community recreation programs are all decided at the local level.

Why Knowing Your Local Government Is So Important

The disconnect is clear: we often know the name of our U.S. Senator, but not our city council member or school board representative. Here's why that matters.

1. Your Vote Has More Power

National elections are decided by millions of votes. Local elections, which often suffer from very low voter turnout, can be decided by just a few hundred—or even a handful. Your single vote has exponentially more mathematical power and a far greater chance of directly deciding the outcome of a local race.

2. You Have Direct Access and Influence

Unhappy with a national policy? It's incredibly difficult to get a U.S. Senator on the phone. Unhappy with a new development or the state of your local park? You can walk into a city council meeting or a school board meeting and speak directly to the people in

into a city council meeting or a school board meeting and speak directly to the people in charge. They are your neighbors, and you can hold them accountable in person. You can join a local advisory board or committee and have a direct hand in shaping policy.

3. It's Your Money

While federal income tax is a major expense, property taxes are the primary source of funding for most local governments, especially public schools. Knowing your local government means knowing exactly how your tax dollars are being spent—whether on a new football stadium, teacher salaries, or road repairs.

Conclusion: Two Governments, One Citizen

It's not that the national government isn't important—it is. But its focus is on the nation as a whole. Your local government is focused on your community. It shapes the environment where you live, work, and raise a family. While national politics provides the headlines, local politics defines your daily reality. Knowing who is in charge and how to make your voice heard is the most direct way to have a real and lasting impact on your own life.

Thank you to Ron Campbell for the submission!

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Community Spotlight



Mid-Ohio Workers Association

Who they are

MWA is a volunteer-run group that has been around since 2001 and is based in Columbus. Their members include service workers, temporary workers, and others with low incomes — folks who often do vital work but don't always get enough in return. They believe that by coming together and organizing, workers can win better conditions, fairer pay, and more respect.

What they do

- They run an **11-point membership benefit program** that includes things like emergency and supplemental food, preventive medical care, non-emergency dental care, legal advice, clothing, and more.
- They organize campaigns to change big systems: for example, helping low-income workers challenged by utility shut-offs, wage theft, or the struggle to survive on low wages.
- They welcome volunteers and train people — no special skills required — to help out with organizing, outreach, benefit work, advocacy, and more.

Why you should learn more

- If you or someone you know is working hard but still struggling to cover rent, utilities, food, or get health care, MWA is doing work that might matter.
- Even if you're not in that situation, supporting or volunteering is a way to stand with working people and help build stronger communities.
- Getting involved means you can learn organizing, advocacy, and the power of collective work — skills that translate into many areas of life.
- Because they're 100% volunteer driven and independent of government funding, each person's participation really counts.

Ways to get involved

- **Volunteer:** You can help out with benefit programs (food distribution, clothing drives, health care advocacy), outreach (helping spread the word in neighborhoods), or organizing work (learning how to help workers advocate for themselves). No experience needed, just a willingness to help.
- **Support through sponsors or local businesses:** If you own or know a business, you might consider becoming a sponsor or partnering with MWA's work. Even small donations or in-kind support can help sustain their benefit programs and campaigns.
- **Spread the word:** Share information about MWA with friends, coworkers, neighbors. If you see someone who might benefit, let them know there's a resource and an organizing community.
- **Use your skills:** If you have time, skills (design, driving, languages, phone outreach), you can bring those to the table and make an impact. They welcome folks with all kinds of backgrounds.

Contact information

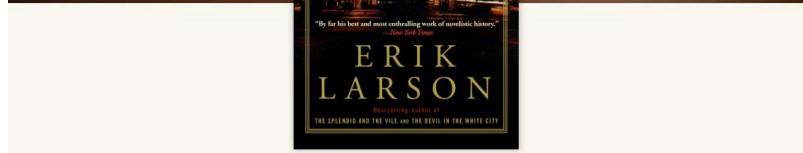
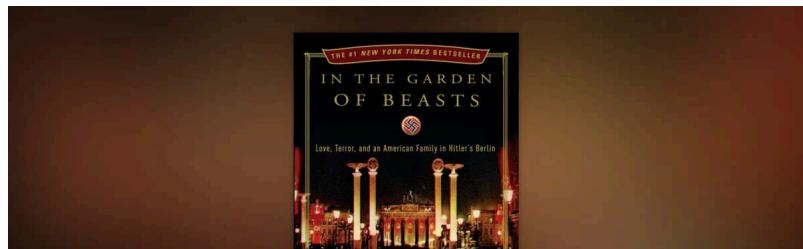
- Address: 2236 Summit St., Columbus, OH 43201
- Phone: (614) 262-0567
- Website: mwa-columbus.org

Thank you to Karen Church for collecting this information!



READER'S RENAISSANCE

BOOK REVIEWS BY OUR MEMBERS



In the Garden of Beasts

Book by Erik Larsen

Review By: Julia O'Brien

Author Erik Larsen, in *In the Garden of Beasts*, tells the story of Berlin from 1933 through 1937, a period of incremental yet rapid change in Germany. Larsen gives us a glimpse of the disorienting change that occurred through the eyes of one uneasy American family, letting us feel the seduction and the terror of a city sliding into darkness.

William Dodd, a mild-mannered professor suddenly thrust into the role of U.S. ambassador, arrives hopeful that reason and restraint might prevail. His daughter Martha, vibrant and curious, is dazzled at first by Berlin—its glamour, its parties, its powerful men in tailored uniforms. While initially an apologist for what she perceived to be progressive, modern changes taking place in Germany, she becomes disillusioned as the cruelty and fear seep into her consciousness while the world politely looks away.

I read this book initially ten years ago, before the insanity of our modern government had unfolded. It seemed like something that had happened long ago and far away and given the guardrails that our founders built into our system of government, a similar path for the United States seemed a ludicrous consideration. Clearly, I no longer am laboring under that delusion.

What makes the story relevant now is not just what happened, but how *normal* it all seemed as it unfolded. Larson reminds us that democracies don't crumble in a single moment—they erode while people tell themselves everything is fine.

There is a strong case to be made for the parallels between 1930s Germany and the United States which currently include:

- Concerns about our national institutions being gutted or overhauled in ways that make their mission unrecognizable (courts, election oversight, regulatory bodies, whistleblower protections).
- Just as William Dodd repeatedly warned his superiors in the State Department and President Roosevelt of Germany's trajectory toward authoritarian government, we in the USA have journalists, historians, watchdog groups, and commentators warning our society of a similar ominous drift.
- The book highlights the complacency of the German people, many of whom exhibited a strange indifference to human rights violations and general atrocity. Many of us are currently frustrated at the abject obliviousness of our neighbors, coworkers, family members, not to mention the media.
- The appeal of spectacle and charisma. In Berlin and across Germany there were huge rallies and parades while at the same time, a message of aggressive "othering" of those who did not embody Aryan ideals (Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, people with disabilities, homosexual people, Roma people, political opponents, etc). We are witnessing similar amplified sentiment which clearly seeks to dehumanize and devalue those in the USA who are immigrants, poor, people of color, those who are LGBTQ, and political opponents. Stoking up fear of "the other" and social division is key to the accomplishment of the goals of authoritarian government. We are currently experiencing high levels of partisan polarization, demographic change, and debates over immigration, identity, and "outsider" groups which are major flashpoints. We see some politicians exploiting or amplifying these divisions in order to gain or shore up support.

I believe, however, that there is a good case to be made for being cautious about the parallels as none of these parallels mean the U.S. *is* equivalent to 1930s Germany with our fate being inevitable — rather the value is in **vigilance**: seeing how early patterns may be similar. For one thing, our scale and context is vastly different from that of 1930s Germany. The specific historical actors, crises, cultures, economics, technology, globalization, and media systems differ in a variety of ways. But while claiming distinct parallels may be premature, we can't ignore the analogous nature of them and we must be stringently vigilant in countering the authoritarian messages being disseminated by our current government. Notably, we have the benefit of a huge body of historical work surrounding the Nazi regime which is only 80 years in the rearview mirror. Many of us had parents or grandparents who experienced the realities of WWII and it continues to loom large in our collective consciousness. My husband and I visited Normandy, France last week and given current events in the USA, it was an extremely sobering experience. Our people fought and overcame this evil once before and we can do it again if we can effectively organize.

Five Minute Activism

If you are at all able, please consider reaching out to any or all of your favorite local candidates. They need your help! You can canvas, pass out lit, and sign up to be a poll stander and pass out slate cards and important information. **It is critical that we all do all we can so that we can make a positive difference in our communities.**

And after that...

VOTE!

Vote vote vote vote!

Remind your family members to vote. Remind your friends. Remind your neighbors.

Offer to help with a ride if that's holding someone back.

Share <https://www.vote411.org/> as a resource - it can tell you your voting location and give you a sample ballot, customized to your address and issues.



October Recap - Soup Party

There's something really special about gathering around food - especially when it's made and shared by your friends and chosen family. Progress's annual Soup-a-palooza was a hit again. It isn't just about crock pots full of soups and stews homemade with love, or the delicious breads and herb butter. It's about what happens when people choose to come together, time after time, and share their talents, their time, their groceries, their recipes, their stories, and their hearts. Events like this remind us that community doesn't happen on accident. It is built, one shared meal and conversation at a time.

We'd like to wish everyone involved a giant thank you for yet again filling our hearts, and also our stomachs.





Keep an eye out for information about our Friendsgiving event! The venue does have a max capacity, so sign-ups will hit the private group first, for paid members.

Join Our Partners In Action

If you're eager to make a significant impact in your community, consider taking action now. It's time to address the issues that matter to you and express your concerns about leadership. Our friends with Indivisible Central Ohio are planning in person visit's to Senator Moreno's office. Please consider joining them to share your thoughts and help drive meaningful change! You can find the sign up sheet at [this link](#).

Thanks everyone!!



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