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## The Patriot-News

### Making a connection

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There has long been too much of a disconnect between county and municipal governments and school districts in Pennsylvania.

Cumberland County Commissioner Rick Rovegno has a great idea with a proposal for a county commission that would bring them together on common issues.

Rovegno's proposed Cumberland County Municipal Cooperation Commission would be similar to local councils of governments, two of which exist in the county, in terms of undertaking joint purchasing and other projects where money can be saved and greater efficiency realized.

But it would go a step further by creating an alliance between the county and all levels of government to consider such things as health insurance and communications consortiums, development of regional recreation facilities, joint land planning, more regionalization of police, fire and emergency services, and joint water and sewer systems.

Rovegno envisions a 15-member oversight panel in which the eastern, western and central regions of the county would each have representatives from borough and township governments, school districts, municipal authorities and nonprofit organizations, such as volunteer fire companies.

This would be one of the largest intergovernmental programs in Pennsylvania and the challenge facing Rovegno is to attract enough local officials to get behind such a commission, which he says is still conceptual in nature and open to adjustment. Given the history of local government in Pennsylvania, that won't be easy.

But it's certainly worth a try and Rovegno is willing to start with only a handful of participants focusing on a limited number of issues, in hopes that others will eventually recognize the benefits and come on board. Some governments and groups, he notes, may only need or want to participate in certain projects.

Although this concept is his idea, Rovegno emphasizes the driving force has to be municipalities, school districts and organizations, not the top down from the county.

Rovegno was instrumental in a newly formed coalition of six states along the Interstate 81 corridor that will look at joint solutions to joint problems. Just as those issues don't stop at state lines, the ones facing local government go beyond municipal and school district borders.

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