

CHERYL MUSGRAVE

Cheryl Musgrave's years of service in state and local government have made her a leading voice on Indiana government reform and a capable, recognized administrator and reformer. Over two decades, she has worked to serve taxpayers by cutting public waste, modernizing outdated processes, and building necessary projects. Her executive skills have been tested by crisis and proven by her record of delivering effective change. Always fiercely independent and devoted to the public interest, she has compiled a record of sensible and innovative changes that have resonated across the state.

Local Reformer

Voters first elected Musgrave to the office of Vanderburgh County Assessor in 1994. During her ten years in that office, she made one of the most backward parts of county government into one of the most forward-looking. She launched the first website in Indiana that made property assessments and sales information freely available. In October 1998, *The Hoosier Farmer*, a publication of the Indiana Farm Bureau, highlighted the site, saying, "This voluntary public disclosure by Mrs. Musgrave herself is certainly a welcome way to assure the public that she is confident that the work of her office is fair and uniform." She also coordinated three levels of government to convert the county's paper maps to a digital format, a Geographic Information System (GIS). Completed in only four years, the digital mapping system has saved countless taxpayer dollars through time savings and enabled governments and citizens to use their resources more effectively.

Purposeful Executive

Musgrave served as Vanderburgh County Commissioner from 2005 to mid-2007. In that office, she initiated the single largest set of road building projects in the county's history, including expanding University Parkway, Green River Road, the Baseline Road railroad bridge, and Cross Pointe Boulevard. She also created new bike trails on county roads, initiated the construction of the now-beloved USI-Burdette Trail, and expanded and renovated Burdette Park. Following the fatal tornado of November 6, 2005, she developed an innovative approach to the problem of debris removal, clearing the debris from public and private property in less than three weeks and helping families to heal after the disaster.

Statewide Advocate for Change

After more than a decade of experience in Vanderburgh County government, in 2007 Governor Mitch Daniels appointed Musgrave as Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF) during the property tax crisis. Throughout the state, public outcry—and protests—showed voters demanded immediate relief from soaring property tax bills. Governor Daniels needed skilled leadership to see the crisis through and recognized that Musgrave’s unique combination of skills and vision meant she could rise to the challenge.

Musgrave immediately set to work reforming the state’s antiquated property tax structure. She streamlined the DLGF’s staff, modernized its information technology, and lobbied for major legislative changes. Her efforts helped realize an historic property tax reform that saved Vanderburgh County homeowners an average of 38 percent on their property tax bills. She cut the cost of school construction by millions of dollars statewide by only approving projects that kept per square foot costs at or below the national average.

Even more important, Musgrave led in efforts to improve government in Indiana for generations to come. Before 2008, a whopping 1,001 township officials oversaw property tax assessments, leading to unfair and potentially corrupt assessments. Musgrave championed efforts in the legislature to eliminate the office of township assessor in the smallest townships and to propose a statewide series of referenda on whether to retain the office in larger townships. Her efforts contributed to the elimination of all but a dozen or so township assessing officials.