

Township Day History

Two sentences in the Ohio Revised Code forever changed what February 1st means to Ohio's township officials. House Bill 652, enacted in 1998, designated February 1st as Ohio Township Day. The year 1999 marked the first Ohio Township Day. The idea of Township Day was brought to the State Association by a trustee in Ashland County who felt a day should be set aside to recognize the hard work and dedication of township trustees and fiscal officers, to promote grassroots government and to encourage township officials to visit schools to explain township government and the duties, qualifications and requirements necessary to serve as a township official.

By no coincidence, the idea for a statewide township recognition day originated in the very place where the Ohio Township Association originated-Ashland County. As the first county in Ohio to form a county association, Ashland County led the efforts to establish a statewide association. Joseph R. Thomas, a Vermilion Township trustee in Ashland County, called for action in 1928 on the formation of a statewide association. Mr. Thomas believed a statewide association would serve to protect townships by staving off centralization and keeping local government truly local, and could help oppose attempts by the state legislature to limit the powers of township government or even abolish townships altogether. Following the unanimous adoption of his resolution, a committee was appointed to carry out Mr. Thomas' vision. The committee called each township official to a state meeting in Columbus on June 28, 1928. By the end of the meeting, the Ohio State Association of Trustees and Clerks, now known today as the Ohio Township Association, was established.

Since its establishment, the Ohio Township Association has dedicated itself to the promotion and preservation of township government in Ohio. The Association works at the General Assembly and with federal legislators on behalf of legislation that affects local government in general and township government in particular.

With the help of the State Association, townships have not only survived the test of time, they have thrived. Township uniquely balance small community living and the preservation of farmland and Ohio's agricultural industry with infrastructure advancements and economic development. Once viewed as a "temporary government" townships today are key players in Ohio's governmental system.