

December 29, 2017

Public Opinions and Principles

Mark Banker in his "Glimpses" article on December 6, 2017, did an excellent job of trying to help us understand taxation. If you missed the article, he poses that the fundamental question has never been "Will we pay taxes?" Instead, the question is "Who pays and who benefits?" I would add that we should also address, "How much should be paid?"

Mr. Banker states, "Governing is when a group of individuals pool resources to achieve needs they cannot, will not, or prefer not to meet on their own." Mr. Banker, I say you hit the bull's eye!!

We want protection of person and property so we pool our resources for law enforcement. We want additional protection so we build a jail to house criminals even though some may argue we should accept the risk of having criminals on our streets. Should we pool our resources for this public need? Some individuals do not feel the government provides enough protection so they pay for additional protection to live in gated communities. Some individuals probably think we have too much law enforcement. These differences in opinions are why we have a legislative body of commissioners that can help balance the community's needs and wants.

We now can go from law enforcement to education and the same arguments and opinions can be made. Some think public education is not good enough and choose private education instead. Some citizens think that too much money is made available for public education, while others say too little.

As one can see these are not easy decisions to make with a host of varying opinions being expressed.

The extent of the list of public needs and wants can be numerous, from non-required services of fire protection, ambulance services, parks and recreation departments, even to the standard of care for our roads and public buildings. I have written a number of articles over the years that reflect on county government and that there must be a balance that is reached from what resources we have available and how those resources are used. Everyone has an opinion and what is best for Roane County could be a mix of those opinions.

Governance is not easy. Governance is not fun. Governance is challenging but most importantly, governance is needed.

Thomas Jefferson, at his first inauguration stated, "Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle." We must recognize that Thomas Jefferson is correct.

I believe we are called to leave this place better than we inherited it. Based on this premise we must make our decisions looking forward considering a number of factors. The basis of decisions should be based on facts achieved from research and analysis. Even though, that does not mean all the decisions will be correct, it should improve our odds. Let's work together for a better tomorrow.