

North Carolina Association of County Commissioners Essay

As I sat down to interview Ronnie Beal, the vice president of Macon County's board of commissioners, I thought back to the various projects, programs, and opportunities I've been a part of that have received support from the county government. Mr. Beal is nearing the end of his second term as county commissioner, and plans to run for office again. In that time, he has shown enthusiastic support for many of the things that I'm involved in; such as my school, 4-H, and other extracurricular interests. Even as a minor, who is ineligible to vote, my life has been greatly affected by county government. In fact, local government did more in the community than I realized, and I began to wonder how they managed to accomplish so much.

I asked Mr. Beal the difference between state and local government, he said, "it's communication. You see me in the store, downtown, in the restaurant—it's easy to have a conversation about local issues and such, whereas state officials can be difficult to reach at times". Most of the 9.8 million citizens of North Carolina won't be able to meet or talk personally with their representative; however, the majority will be able to better communicate their view to local officials. Because of this, local officials are even able to consider the views of minors more easily. Members of local government are in a unique position-- they have the opportunity to know many of their constituents personally and to affect their lives based on their input.

The main job of a government is to represent its constituents, but local government can tailor its services to the specific needs of the community. When I asked Mr. Beal what his priorities were as commissioner, he responded that he aimed to improve services and value of life for citizens. Macon County's local government has been able to improve my community by taking citizens' views into account and making changes based on them. This cannot happen very often in larger government, simply because it's difficult to find general consensus or need among a large population. Local governments are in a unique position where they are able to know their constituents on a personal level. This opens the door for county officials to improve the community in different ways that state or national government.

After my interview with Mr. Beal, I decided that local governments didn't necessarily do more than state or national governments; they just had different opportunities and affects because of their more personal standpoint. I was glad to know I could speak with my county officials and have my view heard, which now seems much less intimidating, and that those officials would try to consider my opinion, and that of other citizens, when making important decisions about our community. The more citizens communicate with their local officials, the more accurately those officials can represent them, and the more those officials can benefit the public.