
A Practical Focus

Judge Griffin has put forward a practical political analysis of Cleveland's city government that is long overdue. During the 33 years that I have served as mayor of the suburb of Brooklyn, I have watched Cleveland steadily decay within an arm's reach of the border of my own city.

Many Cleveland residents have moved from their homes to Brooklyn and other Cleveland suburbs in search of the basic services they could not find from their own city administration. In talking to many of these "transplanted Clevelanders," it becomes obvious they left the city to regain a control over their life-styles.

They want a mayor they can talk to about dogs and trash. They want clean and quiet streets. They want places to shop, neighbors and landlords who maintain properties, and convenient recreation for both themselves and their children.

They want efficient management of public servants and a city council who will work to keep taxes low and services of high quality. They want an independent city council that looks to the mayor for leadership to achieve these priorities.

All too often, the importance of business in a city's implementation of these priorities is overlooked. Without a healthy business base, taxes would be higher and services less efficient. And in a successful city government, business interests will reinforce these residential priorities.

The challenge of a mayor today is to build a working coalition of these forces—residents, elected officials, city employees and business leaders. And the key to such a coalition is communication.

The development of this communication rests usually in the office of the mayor. My 33-year tenure has taught me that communication is most efficiently fueled with an open door. The door to my office remains open during business hours to any constituent—resident, council member or businessman—and I have found this to be valuable in airing community opinion feelings. Through this effort, I am able to hear and then see that these complaints are corrected.

This close working relationship with the city lends itself most efficiently to a small government unit and thus I personally can testify to the proposals that Judge Griffin puts forth in this book.

Judge Griffin has done a great service by focusing on these practical problems of time, talk, oversight and power. My hope is that this book will not become just another adornment on the political bookshelf. Those who look towards a regional or a restructured county government as a solution for the City of Cleveland's problems will be interested in the many innovative outlooks in this book. Judge Griffin argues that smaller government units – not larger units – will provide the direction for the future of Cleveland. And this makes all too much sense.

The direction that Judge Griffin outlines provides a framework that Cleveland and all major urban cities should take to heart if we ever expect to get our money's worth from government.

John M. Coyne, Mayor
City of Brooklyn, Ohio
January 1981