
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE
NEWS RELEASE



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Three Kent County Commissioners Meet White House Officials

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Commissioners Emily Brieve, Stan Ponstein and Robert Womack joined more than 50 county commissioners from across Michigan on August 8, 2017 at a White House Conference to discuss greater cooperation between local and federal leaders. The Commissioners were invited by the Trump administration to share their views on public policy challenges facing local governments.

Commissioner Brieve said it was an informative visit. "Communicating with the various levels of government can be like playing a game of telephone. This meeting was important because it gave us, at the County level, a direct line to the White House," Commissioner Brieve of District 10 (Gaines and Caledonia Townships) said. "We were able to communicate our role in local government and bring light to issues important to counties in Michigan. This opportunity has allowed us access to departments that provide funding for core services to Kent County residents."

Commissioner Ponstein felt honored to receive an invitation. "No one with the Michigan Association of Counties has ever known of the White House inviting County Commissioners to appear before them to speak of shortcomings of the Federal Government. I am glad I had the opportunity, along with two other Kent County Commissioners, to have our voice be heard," Commissioner Ponstein of District 7 (Grandville and part of Wyoming) said after the visit. "I was asked often, 'What does the public really think?'; I simply stated that in Kent County, when residents see a problem, they work together to find a solution; they don't feel that way about the Federal Government; they feel the system is broken and it no longer works for the people."

The evening before the conference, the Commissioners attended a briefing from the Michigan Association of Counties and National Association of Counties on "Matters of Importance to Michigan." "The engagement of Michigan commissioners in this event is highly encouraging," said Stephan W. Currie, Executive Director of the Michigan Association of Counties. "There's nothing more valuable in the development of strong public policy than to have local elected officials giving their on-the-ground assessments to federal leaders."

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