

# **Bond Case Briefs**

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## **The Best Politics Are Local.**

**Every town council, county commission and school board is a testament to the American system of government.**

As America turns 250, the celebrations in Washington and Philadelphia will naturally take center stage. But equally important is what goes on in every town hall, county seat and school board, where the triumph of the American Revolution plays out every day.

“Our local areas are not governed . . . they act for themselves,” Woodrow Wilson wrote in his 1898 book, “The State.” “The large freedom of action and scope of function given to local authorities is the distinguishing feature of the American system of government.” The federal government has expanded in its power and mandates since Wilson’s time. He abetted that change. But local government still matters a great deal. To know it is to love it, at least most of the time.

I’ve had the opportunity to serve in local government and to engage with it directly. My service is on what the U.S. Census of Governments would term a “special-purpose” body—our local board of assessment review in Rye, N.Y. We hold an annual public “grievance day” on which local homeowners can appear at City Hall to make the case their property taxes are unfairly high. It’s a thankless role; we deny most claims. But we listen carefully to the older couples on fixed incomes and new owners surprised by their bills. Rarely do we tell the assessor to lower the tax bill he has set (only if comparable homes have lower tax bills), but we take claims seriously. Most people thank us for listening, a gratifying response. We are volunteers, as are the thousands who serve on local zoning and school boards across the country.

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### **The Wall Street Journal**

By Howard Husock

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