

Why Dan of the Community (aka ex-clerk Dan English) doesn't embrace privatization:

From long experience, I'm always very leery of the push to privatize services that otherwise would be provided by the public sector. It usually costs more in the long run because any private provider has to add in their profit margin into the costs before they provide even the first speck of service. To keep the initial price "competitive" they have to cut employee salaries and benefits. It's simple math.

At first blush that might sound like a good thing but those employees, if they still have a job, now have less to spend at local merchants, and may now qualify for various public assistance programs to boot. None of that is good for the local economy or property taxpayers.

Let me give one very clear example. During my tenure as Clerk, the Commissioners at a point in time decided we needed an extra layer of security at the county courthouse. Because they didn't want to "grow government" they instead contracted with a private security company which I believe was Watson Security at the time.

Fast forward a few years when one of their employees (who made significantly less than their county counterparts and had no health insurance) had a heart attack and the county employees were holding bake sales to pay for his medical bills. I don't know the exact details of this case, but often this type of situation would end up being paid for by the county assistance fund which by the way is 100% county property tax funds.

I thought this was nuts.

I offered to do an analysis and found that based on the amount we were paying the private security company we could bring those positions on as county employees, pay them a livable wage, give them health insurance instead of risking claims to the county assistance funds, increase their training budget, and integrate their duties with some of those of the bailiffs...AND SAVE THE COUNTY MONEY.

After a bit of hemming and hawing, that plan was adopted and I believe they are still county employees which has worked out better for them, the taxpayers, and the community.