

# Council-Manager Government: A Perspective

David M. Limardi,  
Midwest Regional Director, ICMA  
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**ICMA**

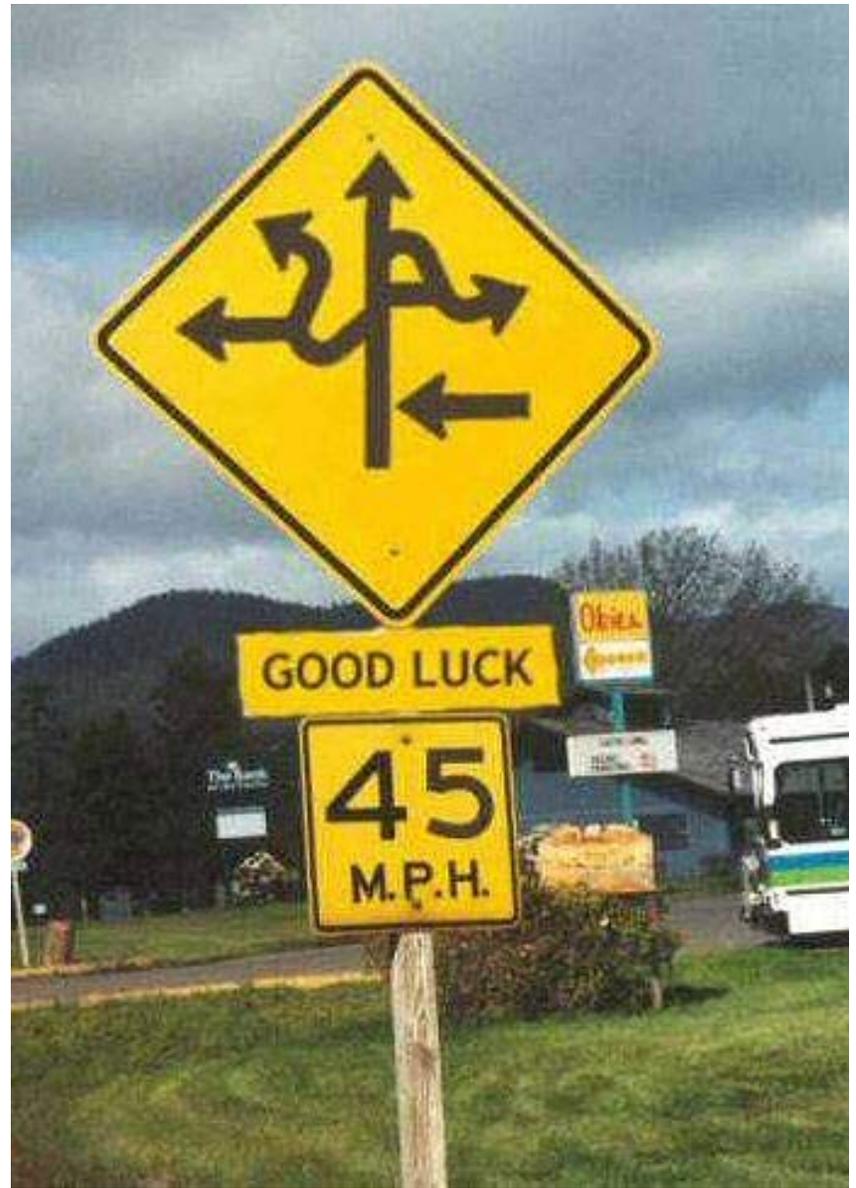




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“May you live in interesting times”

Ancient Chinese Curse



## **Decades of Denial**

**Financial Stability**



## **Moments of Disruptive Change**

**1. Vast Political, Cultural  
and Demographic Change**

**2. No Strategy, Just  
Tactics**



## **Rendezvous with Reality**

**The New Order of Things**

# the future

local governments and regions  
**will be on their own**

cross-section strategies  
**will be the norm**

performance  
**will increasingly matter**

# the future (continued)

citizen trust will be the

**working capital of innovation**

maintain identity but

**match issues to geography**

find and build

**communities of interest**

transparency   
engagement   
performance   
accountability 

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**trust**



# Council-Manager Government Statistics

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- **More than 150 million Americans**—nearly half the U.S. population—**live in communities operating under council-manager government**
- **3,677 (49%) of 7,555 U.S. municipalities** with populations > 2,500 and known form of government operate under council-manager government



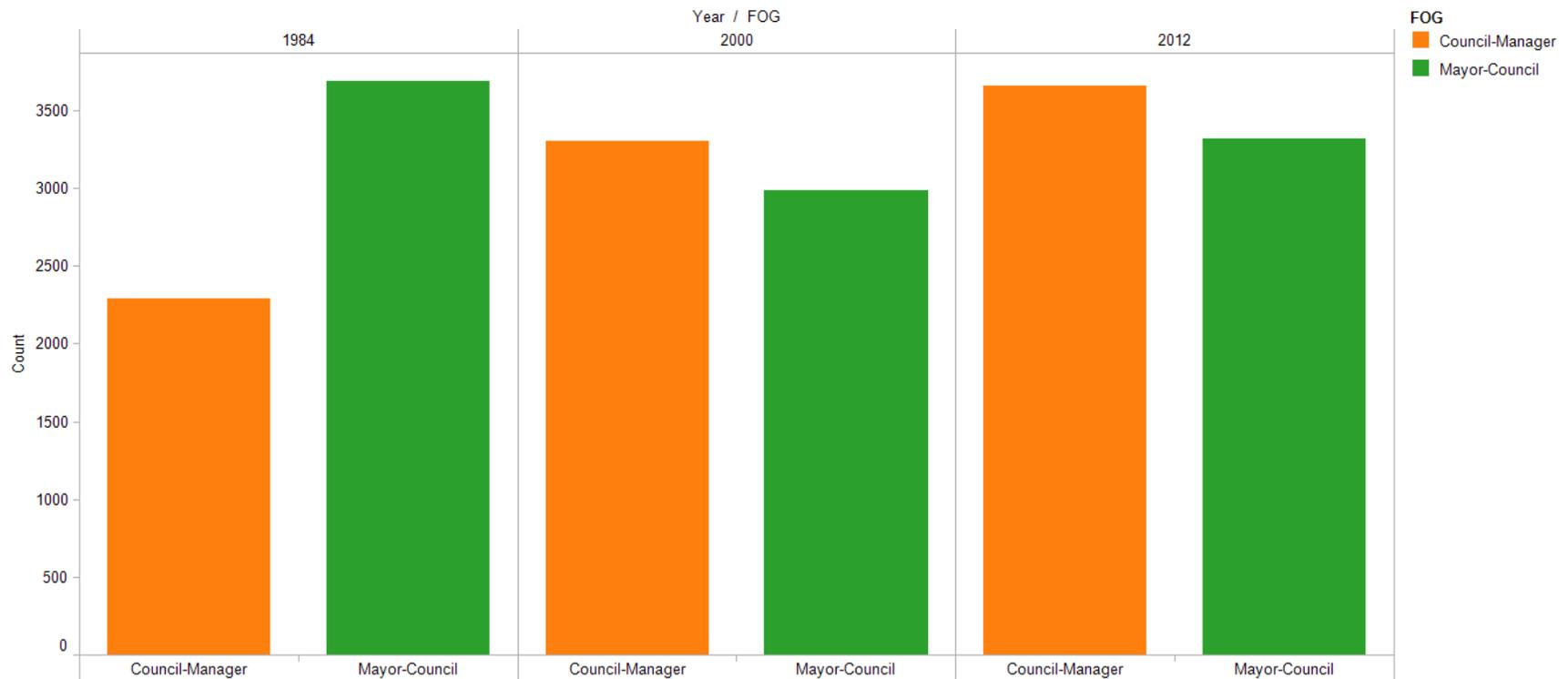
## Council-Manager Government Statistics

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- **58%** of U.S. municipalities with populations  $> 100,000$  operate under council-manager government.
- **61% (144 out of 236)** municipalities with populations similar to that of Flint, MI (between 100,000 and 249,999 pop.) operate under council-manager government.



# The profession is growing.....





## Council-Manager Government Statistics

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- February 2011 study by IBM Global Business Services found that **cities that operate under C-M form are nearly 10% more efficient** than those that operate under the mayor-council form.
- Proves that “investing executive authority in **professional management shielded from direct political interference** should yield more efficiently managed cities.”



## Council-Manager Government Statistics

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- **NCL continues to recommend C-M form** today through its Model City Charter.
- **Form is flexible enough to meet needs of some of the largest U.S. cities**, including: Phoenix (1.5 million); San Antonio (1.4 million); Dallas (1.2 million); San José, CA (982,765); Austin (842,592); Fort Worth (777,992); Charlotte(775,202); and Kansas City, MO (464,310).



# History of Council-Manager Government

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- **Born out of progressive reform movement** to address corruption rampant among cities in late-19th and early-20th century U.S.
- **National Municipal League** [now National Civic League (NCL)] led charge for reforms.
- Reforms engaged business sector for change and **spawned many structural experiments, including the council-manager (C-M) system**, which paved way for professionalization of local government management.

No, none of the traditional players appears appropriate to run the country after these three demented weeks. There is no guarantee any of them would have behaved any better than Gore or Bush, given the chance.

So . . . what to do?

The answer is to do what many American cities have done — cities that have become sick of petty political infighting:

Get rid of the mayor — or at least strip the mayor of any genuine power.

Instead, hire a city manager.

City managers — when the system works as it should — are non-political. They have no politics-driven agendas: They are hired to get a job done:

Make the city work — and make it work efficiently.

So, for the next four years, perhaps that is what we as a democracy should do.

While Gore and Bush are quietly sitting in a corner observing their timeout — thinking about what they have put us all through — a city manager, on the national level, can run the country.

The Congress can still make laws and set policy. The courts can keep everything legal.

The city manager — all right, the national manager — can, without a whiff of politics, run the United States.

**Chicago Tribune**

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2000 ■ SECTION 5

**Bob Greene**



**Send Bush and Gore  
to their rooms —  
bring in the pros**

Four years from now, if we want to, we can go back to the old way of presidential campaigns and presidential inaugurations.

But we may not want to. The national manager system may turn out to be the way we decide to live happily ever after.



# Benefits of Council-Manager Government

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- **Flexible** enough to adapt to local needs and demands.
- **Draws clear distinction** between administrative role of the professional local government manager and policy role of the elected body.
- **Policy making concentrated in entire governing body**, which focuses on strategic planning and policy development for the community.



## Benefits of Council-Manager Government

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- Organization is led by **highly trained, nonpartisan, experienced local government professional.**
- Increasingly, **professional managers possess a master's degree or higher** (nearly 69% in 2012), most often in public administration.
- Continuous learning and innovation lead to continuous improvement of community services.



## Benefits of Council-Manager Government

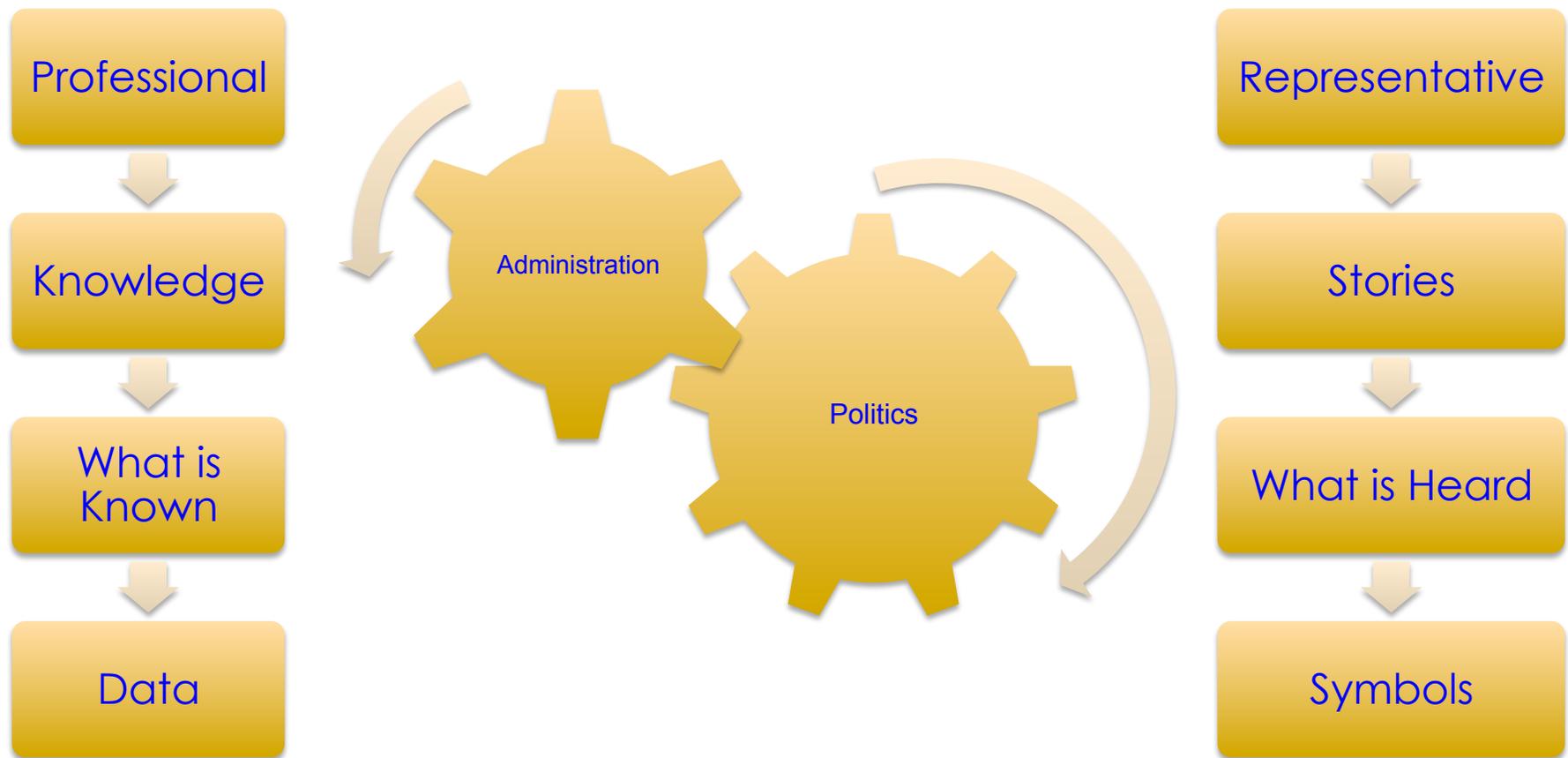
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- Professional local government manager appointed by majority vote of elected body for a definite or indefinite term.
- Subject to termination by a majority vote of elected body at any time.
- Implements vision and policies established by elected body with emphasis on **effective, efficient, equitable, and ethical service delivery.**

# Value Proposition of Council-Manager Government

- To be successful, every community needs strong:
  - Political leadership
  - Policy development
  - Focus on execution and results
  - Commitment to transparent and ethical government
  - Representation and engagement of all segments of community

There is an inherent tension between building an efficient, effective organization and the realities of politics and between the immediate present and a sustainable future.





# The Working Alliance

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- Goals – mutually endorse and value
- Tasks – reflect the behaviors of both parties and are perceived as relevant and each accept responsibility
- Bonds – positive attachments including trust, acceptance and confidence
- A spirit of collaboration

Bordin, 1969



## Value Proposition of Council-Manager Government

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- ✓ Adds value to quality of public policy and via experience and expertise
- ✓ Takes long-term, community-wide perspective.
- ✓ Committed to a set of ethical practices (i.e., ICMA Code of Ethics).
- ✓ Builds consensus among diverse interests.
- ✓ Promotes equity and fairness.
- ✓ Develops and sustains organizational excellence and innovation.

# professional managers



facilitators  
of vision



community  
builders



designers



voice in  
policy



ethics +  
values



reformers +  
reformed



## For more information:

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David M. Limardi  
Midwest Regional Director  
ICMA

[dlimardi@icma.org](mailto:dlimardi@icma.org)

847-533-0402

[http://icma.org/formofgovt.](http://icma.org/formofgovt)