



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

December 16, 2024

Dear Members of the Legislature,

I am writing to express my strong support for the committee substitute for Ordinance 5908. This proposal represents a thoughtful and necessary step to ensure that Jackson County maximizes the benefit of its remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds while addressing pressing needs within our community.

As you know, I have consistently called for an open, fair, and competitive process to allocate ARPA funds equitably. However, given today's date—December 16, 2024—we have passed the point where it is feasible to implement such a process in time to meet the federal deadline of December 31, 2024. To ensure these funds remain in Jackson County, we must now take the responsible step of reimbursing ourselves for eligible expenses already incurred or to be paid with county tax revenue. This will allow us to keep these funds in our community while freeing up county dollars to address urgent needs.

The substitute ordinance reflects the work of county staff to refine and improve the original proposal, incorporating legislative feedback and reducing staff reporting requirements and costs. These updates will help streamline the administration of these funds, allowing us to preserve vital federal dollars for our residents and community.

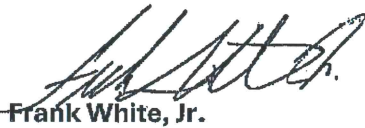
While the committee substitute does not dictate how these freed-up county revenues will be used, I want to be clear about my intentions. If this ordinance is adopted, I will propose that half of the "new county revenue" be allocated to support local nonprofits, community organizations, and similar groups. However, I will only support these awards if a new, fair, transparent, and competitive process that is in accordance with the county's procurement policies and practices is developed, approved, and implemented to determine how these funds are distributed.

The other half of this revenue must be dedicated to addressing critical capital improvement projects within the county. Many of our county facilities are in dire need of repairs and upgrades due to years of deferred maintenance. By investing in these essential projects now, we can avoid future emergencies and reduce the overall financial burden on taxpayers. Recent failures—such as those at the county jail, the downtown courthouse elevators and air conditioning system—have demonstrated the high costs and disruptions that occur when we wait for systems to fail. This proactive approach will help us maintain safe, functional, and efficient facilities that serve our residents while saving money in the long run.

This balanced approach ensures that these funds will serve the people of Jackson County in two essential ways: providing immediate support for community organizations through a transparent process, and enabling us to maintain and improve our facilities, infrastructure, and services without further burdening taxpayers. I respectfully request you support the committee substitute for Ordinance 5908, and I look forward to working with you to finalize a fair and responsible plan to maximize the impact of these critical funds for the benefit of our residents and community partners.

On a personal note, I want to sincerely thank those of you who have reached out or conveyed your thoughts and prayers during what has been an incredibly difficult and frightening time for my family. The sudden loss of my brother-in-law, coupled with the serious health emergency my wife is battling, has reminded me just how fragile and precious life is—and just how unimportant political games are in the grand scheme of things. Your kindness and support mean more than I can express.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank White, Jr.", with a horizontal line extending to the left.

Frank White, Jr.
Jackson County Executive