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Home rule law 'step in the right direction'

Sunday, April 20, 2008

By **KEITH CLINES**

Times Staff Writer keith.clines@htimes.com

But many are frustrated by the law's limitations

The limited home rule implemented by the Madison County Commission last year has helped to clean up the county despite some problems with the law, and some commissioners now want more power to address rural issues.

The state Legislature has to pass acts to give counties the power to adopt laws because the Alabama constitution does not give counties the same authority to adopt laws as it does for cities.

The Legislature in 2006 passed the Alabama Limited Self Governance Act that gives counties more authority to address problems such as abandoned houses, junk, noise and sewer runoff.

Madison County voters approved the law, also known as the limited home rule law, and the commission adopted the portion of the law that deals with junk on property.

The junk law, which went into effect July 1, has been effective, said District 4 Commissioner Dale Strong, whose district includes Harvest and Monrovia.

"It has (made a difference) in my district," Strong said. "It's a huge step in the right direction."

District 3 Commissioner Jerry Craig, whose district includes Gurley and New Hope, said, "For me to say it will cure the problem, I can't say that. But, it definitely has helped."

When the county receives a complaint about junk on a property, county Administrator Howard Baites, who enforces the junk law, visits the property and decides if a violation exists.

Junk law at work

If there is a violation, he issues a letter to the property owner giving the owner 30 days to clean up the property. The county can take the owner to court if the junk isn't removed in 30 days. Baites said the county can give the owner an extension past the 30 days if the owner is making an effort to clean up the property....



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