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U.S. Funds Keeping ACOG Alive

ACOG, the Association of Central Oklahoma Governments, is struggling for survival. But as long as federal money is available to pay some 30 employees, it will continue.

ACOG is only one of 11 substate planning districts that were created by executive order issued by former Gov. David Hall May 21, 1971, later confirmed by the legislature.

These districts, no two exactly alike, include the entire state of Oklahoma. The substate planning districts are associated with a nationwide federal administrative system which groups states into regions for channeling funds and projects. Oklahoma is included in the region headquartered in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex.

The entire structure has been challenged as an interposition of additional layers of bureaucratic government designed to weaken local au-

thority and to centralize functions for greater responsiveness to Washington bureaus and agencies.

ACOG isn't the only substate district that has troubles. Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG), composed of Tulsa, Creek and Osage counties, had a wrangle when citizens sued to force Osage county commissioners to withdraw. Others may have had problems without making them so well-known.

ACOG's biggest arguments have concerned the allocation of voting power to member governments. Smaller communities want more votes and they want Oklahoma City to have less in proportion to population, area and needs. The federal attitude seems to favor a "one city, one vote" plan, which could give small towns a stranglehold on the metropolitan area.

As a result of this argument and because of disillusionment of dele-

gates, ACOG is stagnated, unable to get a quorum together to elect officers or take action.

Gov. David Boren is bypassing ACOG in dealing with state institutions. He has indicated that he prefers to deal with elected officials. The issue has arisen in connection with a diagnostic center for the Board of Corrections, a proposed health systems agency and mass transit plans.

Because of its potential influence on local governments, Oklahomans may want to take another look at the entire substate structure. The basic question involved is just how much more local government we want to deliver into the hands of federal bureaus.

The substate planning districts were created by an executive order of the governor. Perhaps they could be eliminated the same way and head off a lot of future headaches.