



Issue Spotlight: Protecting Taxpayer Dollars at the Local Level

Updated as of April 14, 2017

The Florida House is committed to ensuring local governments are responsible, transparent, and accountable with taxpayer dollars. Responsible use of taxpayer dollars gives Floridians confidence in their government.

Below are brief descriptions of bills that offer opportunities to advance this mission. Please refer to bill texts and analyses for more specific information on what each bill does and does not do.

Local Government Fiscal Transparency – HB 7065, Ways & Means Committee and Rep. Burton

- The bill would promote and enhance local government fiscal transparency as follows:
 - Requires easy public access to local government governing boards' voting records related to tax increases and issuance of tax-supported debt (phased in over four years).
 - Requires easy online access to property tax TRIM notices and a four-year history of property tax rates and amounts at the parcel level is also required (phased in over three years).
 - Requires additional public meetings and expands public notice requirements for local option tax increases, other than property taxes, and new long-term, tax-supported debt issuances.
 - Requires local governments to conduct and consider a debt affordability analysis prior to approving the issuance of new, long-term tax-supported debt.
 - Under current law, local governments are required to have an annual financial audit.
 - The bill requires the auditor to report whether or not the local government is in compliance with the provisions of the new "Local Government Fiscal Transparency Act" contained in Part VIII of ch. 218, F.S., created by the bill.
 - The Auditor General must request evidence of corrective action from local governments found not to be in compliance with the Act.
 - Local governments must provide evidence that corrective action has been initiated within 45 days and evidence of completion within 180 days of such request.
 - The Auditor General must report to the Legislative Auditing Committee local governments that do not take corrective action.
- Local government fiscal transparency will help citizens gain access to important information so they can be more engaged on important government decisions.

Local Government Fiscal Responsibility – HB 7063, Ways & Means Committee and Rep. Caldwell

- The bill would strengthen local government fiscal responsibility as follows:
 - Prohibits property tax increases where local governments have certain unrestricted fund balances.
 - Prohibits local governments from enacting, extending, or increasing local option taxes unless they have not increased property taxes in the last three years.



HOUSE MAJORITY OFFICE

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



REPRESENTATIVE RAY RODRIGUES, MAJORITY LEADER

- Requires local option taxes to be approved by voters only at general elections with a 60 percent voter approval.
- Requires any new debt that exceeds five years in length to be approved only at general elections with 60 percent voter approval, with exceptions in emergency situations.

Limitations on Property Tax Assessments – HJR 21, Rep. Burton

- The Florida Constitution requires all property to be assessed at just value (i.e., market value) on January 1 of each year for purposes of ad valorem taxation, subject to assessment limitations and exemptions in certain circumstances. In 2008, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment limiting annual assessment increases for most non-homestead parcels to 10 percent of prior year assessed value. This limitation does not apply to district school board assessments or in years when a property undergoes certain changes, including changes in ownership. Unless renewed, the 2008 amendment is set to expire on January 1, 2019.
- HJR 21 is a joint resolution to propose a constitutional amendment to permanently retain the current 10 percent cap on annual non-homestead assessments approved by voters in 2008.
- Passing this resolution and the constitutional amendment would ensure property owners avoid a substantial tax increase.

Community Redevelopment Agencies – CS/CS/HB 13, Rep. Raburn

- CS/CS/HB 13 would reform community redevelopment agencies (CRAs), which are created by cities or counties to address slum, blight or affordable housing shortages through redevelopment.
- The Local, Federal & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee found that some CRAs use taxpayer dollars for improper purposes and that all CRAs need better reporting and oversight. The subcommittee also found that cities and counties can perform the same functions as CRAs.
- The bill seeks to fix these problems by increasing transparency and accountability for CRAs:
 - Requires board members to receive ethics training.
 - Requires the Department of Economic Opportunity to post a list of inactive CRAs online.
 - Requires more oversight of each CRA's budget process.
 - Phases-out existing CRAs unless a supermajority of board members serving on the board that created the CRA vote to retain the agency.
 - Stops cities and counties from creating new CRAs.
- Too many of the over 200 CRAs throughout the state do not live up to the high standards taxpayers deserve.