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that is morally wrong.*

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**State Senator Informs Taxpayers of Property Tax Protections and
Calls on Taxing Jurisdictions to Roll Back Tax Rates**

ST. LOUIS CO. – Informing property owners of the duty local taxing jurisdictions have to prevent growth of property tax reassessments from totaling more than 5 percent or the current consumer price index, which is 3.5 percent, Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, today called for local taxing jurisdictions, including St. Louis County, to roll back their tax rates. Gibbons, vice-chairman of the Joint Committee on Tax Policy, was alarmed to learn of potentially outrageous increases in property value reassessments many of his constituents were experiencing.

“Reassessment is about keeping values accurate, it is not suppose to be about raising taxes,” Gibbons said. “I want to help protect taxpayers and their homes by arming them with the knowledge that the county, school districts - all our local taxing jurisdictions can and should roll back their tax rates.”

Gibbons noted the county’s assessed valuation of existing property increased by 12.7 percent this year from 2004. Law limits local government from allowing growth in property taxes caused by reassessments to 5 percent or the current CPI, which is 3.5 percent. However, the county and many local taxing jurisdictions have not proposed to roll back the actual tax rate, rather only the tax rate ceiling which reflects the highest levy voters approved. To meet the spirit of the Hancock Amendment, the county should roll back its tax rate by 9.2 percent, or from 58 cents to 53.26 cents per \$100 of assessed value, in order to account for the difference in the allowed increase and the actual increase.

“Rolling back the tax ceiling year after year does absolutely nothing,” Gibbons said. “For example, when the county keeps its property tax rate at the same level as it has done since 1989, it means every time a property’s assessed value rises, say 20 percent, the property owner gets hit with a 20 percent tax increase.”

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GIBBONS CALL FOR TAX ROLL BACKS

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Gibbons said the county council along with most local taxing jurisdictions such as school districts and public libraries are expected to vote on their respective property tax rates by the end of the month, making now the time to inform taxpayers about these jurisdictions' option to roll back their tax rates. Gibbons encouraged taxpayers to contact their county council members, school board members and other taxing jurisdiction representatives about rolling back the property tax rates.

“The Rockwood School District, the City of Kirkwood and its public library, the City of St. Louis, and the St. Louis School Board are great examples of taxing jurisdictions that are rolling back their tax rates to account for extreme reassessment growth,” Gibbons said. “But these great examples are outnumbered by taxing districts that are not planning to roll back.”

Gibbons said he plans to watch local taxing jurisdictions to make sure they roll back their tax ceilings and encourage them to also roll back their tax rates. Gibbons said if jurisdictions rolled back their tax rates to mimic the tax ceiling roll backs, it would keep property taxes as low as possible while allowing for growth in local government budgets.

“If the county council voted to roll back the tax rate to the 53.26 cents level, the county budget would still grow by \$5.7 million and taxpayers would save \$10.1 million collectively,” Gibbons said. “Plus, individual taxpayers would save close to 10 percent on the county portion of their property tax bill.”

Gibbons warned that savings recognized by property owners will be limited unless all taxing jurisdictions opt to roll back.

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