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## **Rolling Back — A Major Step In the Right Direction**

JEFFERSON CITY — Senate debate is expected very soon on legislation sponsored by Senate leader Mike Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, that would protect Missouri taxpayers from rising tax bills brought on by property reassessments.

The property tax reform package (Senate Bill 711) would require cities, school districts and other taxing entities to roll back their tax levy rates whenever additional revenues from reassessments exceed inflation — a requirement that will help prevent some people from being taxed out of their homes.

Taxpayers in St. Charles County, neighboring St. Louis County and some fast-growing communities around the state were particularly hard-hit by higher property taxes following the recent two-year reassessment. St. Charles County's overall assessed property value increased by 10 percent; St. Louis County, an alarming 22 percent. Since then, taxpayers have been rallying for tax relief, particularly senior citizens and first-time home buyers whose incomes can't keep pace with soaring tax bills.

Here's what a 22 percent increase can do to a homeowner. Let's look at a home assessed at \$200,000 two years ago. This year, let's say, it's now assessed at 22 percent more, or \$244,000. Using a similarly modest overall levy rate of \$5 per hundred dollars of valuation, the tax bill for two years ago would have been \$1,900. (Residential levy rates apply to 19 percent of a home's assessed value.) But this year, the tax bill would come in at \$2,318 — a whopping \$400-plus increase.

This issue is the culmination of an unintended consequence of the Missouri Constitution that requires only taxing jurisdictions operating at their taxing cap to roll back their tax rates to protect taxpayers from paying too much.

If successful, the proposed change would require all taxing jurisdictions, regardless of whether they are operating at or below their tax cap, to roll back tax rates. The measure will also close a loophole that allows taxing districts to apply new voter approved levies to future and unknown assessments. In addition, it allows taxpayers to receive plenty of advance notice of assessments and tax bill increases, plus expands tax relief for low-income seniors and the disabled, including increasing the Senior Citizen Property Tax credit to \$1,100.

I join a growing number of lawmakers and taxpayers from across the state who support the passage of this vital legislation during the current legislative session. No one should be subjected to the nightmare of being taxed out of the American Dream.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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