



## **"Lowering Broward County Property Taxes Again in FY 2010"**

By Broward County Commissioner  
and Vice Mayor Ken Keechl

When I campaigned to be your Broward County Commissioner, I promised that I would never vote to increase your property taxes. I have kept that promise for the last two years. I intend to keep it for the next two years as well.

For Fiscal Year 2008, I voted to lower property taxes and shrink the County's budget by approximately \$90 million dollars per year. My colleagues agreed by a 9-0 vote.

For Fiscal Year 2009, I voted to lower property taxes and shrink the budget by approximately \$87 million dollars per year. My colleagues agreed by a 7-2 vote.

Since these are recurring, yearly savings, the result of these two votes was to shrink the Broward County budget by almost \$177 million dollars per year.

How did we do this? We instituted a hiring freeze, which reduced operating expenses drastically. We reduced capital projects by prioritizing and funding "needs" while postponing or eliminating "wants". We paid off certain debt (to lower yearly interest costs) and we minimally raised certain fees (which hadn't been reviewed or raised in more than 13 years!)

On February 17, 2009, the County Commission had its first Fiscal Year 2010 budget workshop. The good news: the majority of my colleagues agreed to lower property taxes for a third consecutive year. The bad news: we couldn't agree on how much to cut from the FY 2010 budget.

Due to the decrease in property values county-wide, some of my colleagues want to raise the property tax (millage) rate applied to all taxable real property in Broward to a certain rate known as the "rolled-back" rate. Technically, this is not considered a "tax increase" because it will bring in the same amount of property taxes as last year. If 5 or more of my colleagues agree, the FY 2010 budget would decrease by approximately \$45 million dollars (for a combined three year cumulative and recurring budget decrease of \$222 million dollars.) Not bad.

Nevertheless, while I believe the County Commission has made real progress over the last two years, and while I believe that \$45 million dollars is a real reduction, I don't believe it is good enough.

In order to keep my promise to you and your families, I believe I cannot, in good faith, vote to raise the County's millage rate on the assessed value of any real property you own in Broward County. To me, an increase in the millage rate equates to a tax increase. If 4 or more of my colleagues agree with me and we keep the County millage rate at last year's rate of 4.888, the County's FY 2010 budget would shrink by an additional \$135 million dollars (for a combined three year cumulative and recurring budget decrease of \$312 million dollars.)

My colleagues and I will continue to discuss the FY 2010 budget for the next several months. I will, of course, continue to fight to lower your property taxes as much as possible. And based on the first budget workshop, I am confident that the majority of the Broward County Commission will eventually vote to once again lower your property tax burden by decreasing the size of Broward's budget by at least \$45 million, and possibly by as much as \$135 million. I will keep you apprized of our discussions.

My best to you and your families.

Broward County Commissioner and Vice Mayor Ken Keechl

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