



Board of County Commissioners

**Ken Keechl**

**Commissioner - District 4**

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### March 2007 Newsletter

## **“It’s All About Property Taxes” By Broward County Commissioner Ken Keechl**

During my campaign for the Broward County Commission, I made several fundamental promises to you. First and foremost, I promised you that I would never vote to increase your property taxes. I intend to keep my promise.

Let’s start with the basics. Just exactly how can you determine if the Broward County Commission is increasing your property taxes for its next fiscal year, 2008? It’s simple: Look for the soon to be published state-defined “rolled-back” millage rate. This “rolled-back” rate is determined yearly in Tallahassee. It is determined by the total amount of property taxes in the current year’s budget, plus an increase in estimated new taxes from new construction growth.

If the Broward County Commission votes to establish a millage rate for the fiscal year 2008 higher than the “rolled-back” millage rate, it’s a tax increase. Period.

Our budgeting process is now underway. We have completed our first budget workshop and it seems to me that most of the County Commissioners recognize the high level of anger and frustration felt by the average Broward County taxpayer. Based on the Broward County Office of Management and Budget’s rough estimate, we have been told that we must eliminate approximately \$54 million dollars from our \$3.7 billion dollar budget in order to establish a budget that doesn’t raise property taxes. Obviously, it can be done; however, the real question is whether 5 of the 9 County Commissioners have the will to do so.

Trust me. As a Broward County Commissioner, I’ve already learned it’s easier to say “yes” than to say “no” when someone is requesting money.

From now until September you will hear the Broward County Commission “educate” you with regard to the difficulties the Commission will face in eliminating \$54 million dollars from our budget. Fair enough. You will learn that about a third of the budget revenues come from “enterprise” funds. These are revenues generated by the airport, seaport, and the water department which cannot be utilized for any other purpose. You will also learn that about half of the budget is comprised of funds requested by Broward’s Constitutional Officers (such as our Sheriff, Property Appraiser, Supervisor of Elections, etc.) You will learn that it is procedurally difficult (but not impossible) to force these elected Constitutional Officers to tighten their own budgets. All of these facts are undoubtedly true.

Nevertheless, it is without question that you elected us to make the hard decisions. As one of my colleagues often says, “If you can’t make the hard decisions, you don’t deserve to sit up on the dais.” He’s right; it’s time to listen to the voters and make these necessary budget cuts. We must tell our Constitutional Officers that they, too, must tighten up their budgets and share in our burden. We must slow down, if not decrease, the size of Broward County’s governmental workforce. We must eliminate-and refuse to fund-services that aren’t absolutely necessary. We must stop capital projects that aren’t essential, unless they can be constructed without increasing the amount of ad valorem property taxes. We have to determine our priorities and fund accordingly.

Again, the budget process is just beginning. Obviously, I can’t predict how my colleagues will vote with regard to the upcoming fiscal year 2008 budget. But I can again tell you how I will vote. After all, campaign promises should be kept by elected officials.

Until next month...

**Ken Keechl, Broward County Commission, District 4.**

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