

By Commissioner Sue Gunzburger
Broward County Commission, District 6

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

Last month Broward County's fiscal year began, which runs from October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008. In late September, after nearly a year of reviewing programs, projects and services, the County Commission voted to reduce the new budget by a record-setting 14 mills. That's the deepest cut in the tax rate in the County's history. Last year, we reduced the millage rate by more than ten percent, the largest decrease in nearly a quarter of a century.

The tax reductions were in response to citizens' demands for property tax reform. This year's reductions will result in a saving of approximately \$143 on the County portion of your tax bill, if you have a homestead exemption. While that may not seem substantial, especially for people who have purchased homes within the last five years, it represents a deep cut in Broward County spending.

While the State of Florida imposed reductions on most municipalities and counties this year, Broward County was somewhat ahead of the curve, because we resolved in January that we would closely examine our priorities and eliminate programs and services that were not essential to quality of life issues.

By this month, you should have received your new tax bill. As you can see, Broward County's portion is about 26 percent. The remaining taxes on your bill are from other taxing authorities—your municipality, School Board, hospital district and other special taxing districts. In fact, more than 80 taxing districts exist in Broward County, all with the authority to tax your property, depending on where you live.

To reduce taxes this year, the County Commission eliminated hundreds on positions, delayed jail construction, reduced expenditures for library books and park programs and eliminated reserve funding for courthouse expansion. Funds to redevelop blighted areas were also cut back.

Unfortunately, local governments alone can not solve the property tax reform dilemma confronting the state. Change will ultimately need to occur at the state level. There are inequities in the levying of taxes throughout the state, which must be corrected by amending the Florida Constitution. Unless these are fair and impartial to all property owners, we will suffer the consequences. The current system impacts our economy and future and must be resolved outside the arena of partisan politics.

At this time, it is anticipated that a Constitutional amendment will be placed on the January 29, 2008, Presidential Primary ballot. If a proposal appears on the ballot, we need to know how it would affect us and how much money could be taken from local government. We're all in favor of lower taxes, but we need more than television commercials to educate us.

Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance with recycling or any other matter, please feel free to contact me 954-357-7006 or you can e-mail me at sgunzburger@broward.org.

Until next month,

Sue Gunzburger
Broward County Commissioner