



**A Message From  
Lois Wexler  
Broward County Commissioner  
District 5**

I write to you today as Broward County's fiscal year is drawing to a close. The time has come for the Broward County Commission to approve a budget for Fiscal Year 2006-07. I wanted to take this opportunity to explain a few things about how property values, the millage rate and taxing authorities interrelate in order to understand why taxes fluctuate from year to year.

There are two major issues that impact your tax bill. First is the assessed value of your property which is set by the Property Appraiser. Second is the millage rate which is set by the taxing authorities.

Fortunately, the County Commission was able to substantially reduce the millage rate, making this the ninth consecutive year the millage rate was either reduced or remained the same. Exercising fiscal prudence, we returned more than half of the 19.2 percent growth in the tax roll, the result of higher property values. With the new millage rate, the average single family homeowner with a homestead exemption will see a decrease on the County portion of their tax bill.

While the County Commission has repeatedly lowered the millage rate, other taxing authorities have not. You should carefully analyze your TRIM notice and contact those taxing authorities which reflect an increase when comparing "YOUR PROPERTY TAXES LAST YEAR" to "YOUR TAXES THIS YEAR IF PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGE IS MADE". If there is an increase, that taxing authority is NOT rolling back their rates. You may want to check into why they believe they cannot roll back the millage rate and ask what they plan to do to help alleviate the tax burden.

Given the relationship between millage rate and property values and for the economic good of Broward County, it is critical that there be balance. Realistic property assessments, a thorough review of the application for homestead exemption, Save Our Homes cap, and the taxing authorities' judicious use of millage rates will help control taxes in our County. It is essential that we work together to ensure that all are paying their fair share to provide the taxing authorities the income necessary to provide for our citizens.

In November, Broward County voters will be given the opportunity to have their voices heard in regard to property taxes. The County Commission approved a straw ballot initiative that will ask voters if they want the ability to transfer their Save Our Homes

taxable value when they sell their current home and buy another in Broward County. This is commonly called “portability”. The voters of Broward County can send a strong and clear message to the Florida Legislature that tax relief is a necessity.

It is also important for you, as a Broward County voter, to become very familiar with two additional initiatives that will appear on the General Election Ballot.

The first issue concerns Broward County’s court system. The County Commission voted to ask Broward County residents whether they support issuing \$450 million in bonds to pay for a new civil and family courthouse in downtown Fort Lauderdale. This project would replace the 50-year-old courthouse building and accommodate projected growth in Broward County’s justice system. In addition, satellite courthouses in Hollywood, Plantation and Deerfield Beach would be expanded. If the bond issue passes, the average Broward homeowner would pay about \$35 more a year in property taxes.

The final ballot initiative that you will be able to vote upon concerns a proposed increase in sales tax here in Broward County. The County Commission, on a 5 to 4 vote, recently authorized placing a referendum on the ballot that will ask voters if they support a one cent sales tax to finance transportation projects in Broward County. I voted against the initiative and would like to take a moment to explain my decision. Broward County must identify a local dedicated revenue source in order to compete for state and federal transportation dollars to address not just today’s needs, but those of a continuously growing population. I have served as an elected official for more than 14 years and have always listened very carefully to those I represent. I am concerned that the proposed "Moving Broward Plan" was not inclusive: Broward County residents did not have sufficient opportunity to provide their thoughts on transportation needs and how the transportation dollars should be spent. The electorate was not given the opportunity to comment on who would provide the oversight for the spending of the \$260 million raised annually.

As a member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), I am not convinced that a full penny is needed for transportation. The County has other needs (for example, services for our elderly and affordable housing) that could potentially benefit from an increase in the sales tax. I cannot in good conscience ask the voters of Broward County to support this tax increase knowing that other needs might require additional tax dollars in the future. Much needed community participation is necessary for the voters’ trust to be earned. I, for one, believe that something as important as an additional sales tax must have three components in place: 1) grassroots participation of our community, 2) a clearly defined plan, 3) the composition and responsibility of the community oversight board.

Before voting on November 7, 2006, you must decide if you have sufficient information to vote to increase our sales tax from its current 6% rate to a 7% percent rate and dedicate those dollars to transportation.

Should you have any questions or desire more information, please contact my office at (954) 357-7005 or email me at [lwexler@broward.org](mailto:lwexler@broward.org).

Regards,

Lois Wexler  
Commissioner, District 5  
Broward County