



► **WCTA ANALYSIS OF THE WALTON COUNTY 2007-2008 BUDGET . . . . . 2**



► **COMMUNITY TAX REFORM SURVEY ANALYSIS . . 4-5**



► **'FINAL MILLAGE RATES FOR EACH TAXING AUTHORITY . . . . . 6**

● **OCTOBER - 2007**

# The Tax Beacon

*focus on*

## Property Tax Reform

WWW.WALTONTAXPAYERS.ORG

THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION, INC  
'THE EYES AND EARS FOR WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS'

THE STATE-MANDATED ROLLBACK OF PROPERTY TAXES FORCED SPENDING DISCIPLINE ON MOST LOCAL GOVERNMENTS. IN WALTON COUNTY, THE ROLLBACK REQUIRED A 9% REDUCTION IN PROPERTY TAX COLLECTIONS, WHICH EQUATED TO A \$9,316,570 DECREASE FROM THE FY2007 BUDGET.

THERE WAS NERVOUS SPECULATION ABOUT WHAT GOVERNMENT SERVICES WOULD BE AFFECTED. WCTA WANTED CITIZENS TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DETERMINE WHICH GOVERNMENT SERVICES WERE MOST IMPORTANT TO THEM. WE HOSTED TWO COMMUNITY FORUMS AND DISTRIBUTED SURVEYS AT EACH ONE.

A FORUM IN MOSSY HEAD WAS ORGANIZED BY TOM TERRELL WITH REPRESENTATIVE DON BROWN THE FEATURED SPEAKER. A SOUTH WALTON FORUM WAS HELD AT THE COASTAL LIBRARY WITH REPRESENTATIVE MARTI COLEY THE FEATURED SPEAKER AND DON

BROWN IN ATTENDANCE. THE AUDIENCE HEARD DETAILS OF THE TAX REFORM BILL DIRECTLY FROM REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED IN PASSING THE LEGISLATION.



A SURVEY WAS THEN GIVEN TO EACH PERSON TO FILL OUT AND PRIORITIZE COUNTY GOVERNMENT SERVICES. THE SURVEY WAS ALSO POSTED ON THE WCTA WEBSITE FOR 30 DAYS. ONLY ONE SURVEY IN ELECTRONIC FORM COULD BE SUBMITTED AND IT WAS RESTRICTED TO EITHER RESIDENTS OR PROPERTY OWNERS OF WALTON COUNTY. PEOPLE FROM SEVEN STATES FILLED OUT THE ONLINE SURVEY.

A TOTAL OF 1,348 SURVEYS WERE RECEIVED.

AS TAX REFORM CONTINUES, WE MUST ALL PULL TOGETHER IN A TEAM EFFORT SO THAT CUTBACKS HAVE THE LEAST IMPACT ON THE MOST IMPORTANT GOVERNMENT SERVICES.

(SEE PAGES 4 & 5 FOR SURVEY RESULTS)



"AN UNLIMITED POWER TO TAX INVOLVES A POWER TO DESTROY; BECAUSE THERE IS A LIMIT BEYOND WHICH NO INSTITUTION AND NO PROPERTY CAN BEAR TAXATION."

# TAX REFORM HIGHLIGHTS

PROPERTY OWNERS IN FLORIDA ORGANIZED A TAX REVOLT AND THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE RESPONDED, PASSING TWO TAX-CUTTING MEASURES IN JUNE 2007. THE FIRST MEASURE MANDATED THAT COUNTIES COLLECT LESS IN PROPERTY TAXES THIS YEAR, WHICH TRANSLATED INTO FORCED BUDGET CUTS FOR FY2008. IT REQUIRED CITIES AND COUNTIES, BUT NOT SCHOOL DISTRICTS, TO ROLL BACK TAXES FOR ALL TYPES OF PROPERTY. THE ONLY EXCEPTIONS WOULD BE LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES VOTING TO OVERRIDE THESE LIMITS WITH MORE THAN A SIMPLE MAJORITY.



THE BLOATED BUDGETS OF MANY COUNTIES, INFLATED YEAR AFTER YEAR, WERE THE BASES USED FOR THE ROLLOBACKS THIS YEAR. THE IMPACT TO WALTON COUNTY WAS A REDUCTION OF \$9,316,570 FROM THE FY2007 BUDGET OF \$137,484,698. THE NEW FY2008 BUDGET (BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2007) IS \$128,168,120.

WALTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS, WITH COOPERATION FROM ALL CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS, MET BUDGET CUTS AND ROLLOBACK REQUIREMENTS WITHOUT REDUCING THE LEVEL OF SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC. A CONSOLIDATION OF NORTH WALTON FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES, FUNDING CUTS TO PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS, PARKS, ROAD PAVING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT, AND NO PURCHASES OF AMBULANCES, FIRE TRUCKS (NORTH WALTON), STAFF VEHICLES, AND NO INCREASE IN STAFF PROVIDED THE BUDGET CUTS. DIFFICULT DECISIONS WERE MADE, ESPECIALLY ELIMINATING OR CUTTING FUNDS TO NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS.

COMMISSIONERS ARE COMMITTED TO CONTINUE "TRIMMING THE FAT". ON BEHALF OF WALTON

COUNTY TAXPAYERS, WE COMMEND AND THANK ALL CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS AND STAFF FOR THEIR HARD WORK IN MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF TAX ROLLOBACKS THIS YEAR.

SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL AND SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT REDUCED THEIR FY2008 MILLAGE RATES (TAX ON PROPERTY)

BELOW THE REQUIRED ROLLOBACK RATES. YEAR AFTER YEAR, SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL HAS REDUCED THEIR MILLAGE VOLUNTARILY. AGAIN, OUR HATS ARE OFF

TO THE DIRECTOR AND BOARD FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO QUALITY SERVICE WHILE KEEPING COSTS LOW TO THE TAXPAYERS.

IN APRIL 2007, SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT WELCOMED NEW FIRE CHIEF RICK TALBERT.



CHIEF TALBERT, WORKING WITH THE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD, IMPLEMENTED NUMEROUS COST-CUTTING MEASURES AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS. WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE DISTRICT'S FISCAL OFFICER, BRIAN FLANAGAN, CHIEF TALBERT PROPOSED A FY2008 BUDGET WITH A REDUCTION IN MILLAGE OF .10 (12.5%). THE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD, ASSURED THAT THERE WOULD BE NO NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON SERVICES, ACCEPTED THE PROPOSED BUDGET AND ROLLOBACK IN TAXES.

THE FIRE DISTRICT IS TO BE COMMENDED FOR ALL THEY HAVE DONE TO HELP THE TAXPAYERS AT THIS DIFFICULT TIME IN OUR COUNTY'S ECONOMIC CLIMATE.

THE WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET FOR FY2008 IS \$135.35 MILLION, HIGHER THAN THE BUDGET FOR ALL WALTON COUNTY OPERATIONS. THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 6,900 STUDENTS IN THE WALTON SCHOOL SYSTEM, FOR A TOTAL EXPENDITURE (OPERATING AND CAPITAL) OF \$19,615 PER STUDENT.

THE WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT IS EXEMPT FROM THE STATE MANDATE FOR TAX ROLLOBACKS.

HOWEVER, THE SCHOOL BOARD VOTED TO REDUCE THE LOCAL OPTION SCHOOL TAX RATES FOR FY2008.

MANY THANKS TO THE SCHOOL BOARD FOR A TAX BREAK THAT WAS NOT REQUIRED BY THE STATE.

THE SECOND PART OF THE TAX-CUTTING LEGISLATION WAS A "SUPER EXEMPTION" FOR HOMEOWNERS THAT WOULD HAVE AFFECTED ALL LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING SCHOOL DISTRICTS. HOMEOWNERS WOULD HAVE A ONE-TIME CHOICE TO KEEP SAVE OUR HOMES (LIMITED PROPERTY ASSESSMENT INCREASES TO NO MORE THAN 3% PER YEAR) OR TO

ACCEPT THE SUPER EXEMPTION. THIS AMENDMENT TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION WAS SET FOR A PUBLIC VOTE ON JANUARY 29, 2008. IN LATE SEPTEMBER, A JUDGE RULED THE AMENDMENT WAS UNCONSTITUTIONALLY MISLEADING.

THIS AMENDMENT AND FURTHER TAX REFORM IS BEING DEBATED IN A SPECIAL LEGISLATIVE SESSION IN TALLAHASSEE DURING THE MONTH OF OCTOBER.

# PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

## "WE THE PEOPLE"

THE SPIRIT OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS IS ALIVE AND WELL IN FLORIDA. IN THE PAST YEAR, WE THE PEOPLE BEGAN A TAX REVOLT TO TAKE BACK OUR GOVERNMENT. TAXPAYERS THROUGHOUT THE STATE UNITED TO FORM ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS AX THE TAX, THE COALITION AGAINST RUNAWAY TAXATION AND CITIZENS FOR PROPERTY TAX REFORM, AND MANY OTHERS, TO COMBAT INORDINATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT GROWTH AND SPENDING.

IN 2006, CONDITIONS ALL CAME TOGETHER TO CREATE THE PERFECT STORM IN FLORIDA. DEVASTATING HURRICANES RESULTED IN CANCELED OR UNAFFORDABLE PROPERTY INSURANCE; THE REAL ESTATE BOOM CREATED INFLATED PROPERTY VALUATIONS; AND, PROPERTY TAXES OUTPACED PERSONAL INCOME. YET LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CONTINUED TO GORGE THEMSELVES AND REFUSED TO REIN IN THEIR SPENDING.

THE CONCEPT THAT GOVERNMENT IS NOT A PROFIT MAKING BUSINESS APPARENTLY ESCAPED THE GRASP OF ELECTED OFFICIALS. ANNUAL BUDGETS WERE CALCULATED BY HOW MUCH MONEY COULD BE COLLECTED AND THEN DECISIONS MADE ON HOW TO SPEND IT. TAXPAYERS FROM ORLANDO TO ST. PETERSBURG TO THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE WERE OUTRAGED OVER LOCAL GOVERNMENTS' UNDISCIPLINED SPENDING, AND INEQUITABLE PROPERTY TAXES THAT HAD SKYROCKETED BEYOND THE ABILITY OF PEOPLE TO PAY.

WE REACHED TOTAL TAXATION SATURATION WITH

GOVERNMENTS WE COULD NO LONGER AFFORD.

WHILE WALTON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS REDUCED MILLAGE RATES FOUR TIMES IN THE PAST SIX YEARS, THESE REDUCTIONS COULD NOT OVERCOME THE HUGE INCREASES IN PROPERTY VALUATIONS DURING THE REAL ESTATE BOOM. PROPERTY TAXES CONTINUED TO CLIMB ASTRONOMICALLY ON NON-HOMESTEAD PROPERTY, WHICH COMPRISES 83% OF TOTAL COUNTY PROPERTIES.



MANY PEOPLE CAN NO LONGER AFFORD TO OWN PROPERTY IN FLORIDA BECAUSE OF INSURANCE COSTS AND TAXES. WHEN TAXES RISE FASTER THAN PERSONAL INCOME, ECONOMIC DISASTER ISN'T FAR BEHIND.

WCTA HAS BEEN THE VOICE FOR ALL COUNTY TAXPAYERS IN CALLING FOR LOWER MILLAGE RATES

AND LEANER AND MORE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT. IT IS OUR MISSION TO SUPPORT THE COUNTY'S FINANCIAL STABILITY AND TO MAKE OUR COUNTY THE BEST IT CAN BE.

TO THIS END, WE HAVE POINTED OUT MANY AREAS TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE GOVERNMENT SPENDING: FUNDING PRIVATE NON-PROFITS, PROMOTIONAL ITEMS FOR EMPLOYEES, A GROWING FLEET OF COUNTY VEHICLES, DOUBLE-DIGIT EMPLOYEE RAISES, APPROVING HUGE TICKET NON-BUDGETED ITEMS, CONSULTANT STUDIES, AND MORE.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO CONVEY A MESSAGE OF FRUGAL AND DISCIPLINED SPENDING TO TAXING BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS WHEN THEIR COFFERS ARE BRIMMING OVER WITH MONEY.

WALTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT, THE SCHOOL DISTRICT, AND SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT HAVE ENJOYED SEVERAL YEARS OF

UNABATED SPENDING UNDER THE HEADING OF "CATCH UP", WHILE AMASSING LARGE RESERVES FOR BOTH DEFINED AND UNDEFINED NEEDS.

THE UPROAR OVER PROPERTY TAXES AND OUTCRY FOR TAX RELIEF FROM TAXPAYER GROUPS LIKE WCTA REACHED THE EARS OF THE NEW GOVERNOR AND STATE LEGISLATURE THIS YEAR. THE LEGISLATURE RESPONDED BY PLACING LIMITS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVENUES, WHICH HAD THE EFFECT OF CAPPING EXPENDITURES. IT IS THIS STATE-WIELDED HAMMER THAT FINALLY PLACED SOME RESTRAINTS ON RUNAWAY LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

IT TOOK THE HEAVY HAND OF TALLAHASSEE TO FOCUS LOCAL OFFICIALS ON THE BUSINESS OF PROVIDING ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES INSTEAD OF GRANTING WISH LISTS. AT LEAST THE STATE HAS APPLIED THE BRAKES TEMPORARILY TO THE OVERWHELMING COSTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

THE STATE LEGISLATION FOR TAX ROLLBACKS GIVES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO RE-THINK GOVERNMENT SERVICES FROM TOP TO BOTTOM. WE NEED THE CONTINUED SUPPORT AND INPUT FROM OUR MEMBERS AND COUNTY TAXPAYERS TO DETERMINE WHAT WE WANT OUR TAX MONEY TO BUY AND HOW MUCH WE ARE WILLING TO PAY.

IN CLOSING, THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP. WE ARE DEDICATED TO BEING THE EYES AND EARS FOR WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS.

**BONNIE MCQUISTON**  
WCTA PRESIDENT



# WCTA COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

THE STATE LEGISLATURE APPROVED A ROLLBACK TAX PLAN WHICH REQUIRES CITIES AND COUNTIES TO MAKE CUTS IN THE BUDGETS.

THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION BELIEVES THAT CITIZENS SHOULD HELP DETERMINE WHICH GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE IMPORTANT TO THEM.

THIS SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED TO HELP DETERMINE WHERE CUTBACKS CAN TAKE PLACE AND WHERE SOLUTIONS CAN BE FOUND WITH THE LEAST IMPACT ON CITIZENS. WE BELIEVE WE MUST ALL PULL TOGETHER, CITIZENS AND GOVERNMENT, IN A TEAM EFFORT TO MAKE WALTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT THE BEST IT CAN BE WHILE SPENDING LESS MONEY.

TOTAL RESPONDANTS -		MEET-ING	ONLINE		
<b>1348</b>		12%	78%		
DO YOU HAVE A HOMESTEAD ON YOUR PROPERTY?		YES	NO		
		61%	39%		
DO YOU OWN ANY PROPERTY THAT IS NOT "HOMESTEADED" IN WALTON COUNTY?		YES	NO		
		38%	62%		
ARE YOU WILLING TO ACCEPT FEWER COUNTY SERVICES IN EXCHANGE FOR LOWER TAXES?		YES	NO		
		79%	21%		
HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN WALTON COUNTY ?	1-5 YRS.	6-10 YRS.	11-15 YRS.	16-20 YRS.	20+ YRS.
	12%	9%	31%	29%	19%
DO YOU RESIDE NORTH OR SOUTH OF THE CHOCTAW-HATCHEE BAY?		NORTH	SOUTH		
		48%	52%		
HAVE YOUR PROPERTY TAXES INCREASED OR DECREASED IN THE LAST SIX YEARS?		IN-CREASD	DE-CREASD		
		39%	61%		

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

### BCC SERVICES ANALYSIS

QUESTION:	DON'T KNOW	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	CRITICAL
BUDGET REDUCTIONS WILL HAVE TO BE MADE TO MEET THE NEW STATE MANDATED MAXIMUM DOLLARS COLLECTED THROUGH AD VALOREM TAXES. PLEASE RATE THESE COUNTY SERVICES IN TERMS OF THE SERVICES RELATIVE IMPORTANCE TO YOU AS A CITIZEN. PLEASE RATE EACH SERVICE AS EITHER CRITICAL, HIGH, MEDIUM OR LOW PRIORITY					
(A) MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS TO COUNTY ROADS	2%	12%	22%	26%	40%
(B) ANIMAL CONTROL SERVICES	1%	51%	17%	23%	8%
(C) CITIZEN SERVICES- (INCLUDES LIBRARY,VETERAN SERVICES,HEALTH DEPT,HUD,EXTENSION)	22%	16%	31%	19%	11%
(D) DEVELOPMENT AND LAND USE PLANNING	24%	52%	12%	7%	5%
(E) CODE ENFORCEMENT-NOISE,LIGHT, SIGN AND YARD ORDINANCES	3%	72%	9%	15%	1%
F) SHERIFFS DEPARTMENT	0%	12%	9%	11%	68%
(G) FIRE PROTECTION/EMS SERVICES	1%	7%	12%	23%	57%
(H) STORMWATER MANAGEMENT	6%	22%	37%	18%	7%
(I) PARKS PROVIDED BY THE COUNTY	2%	22%	59%	15%	2%
(J) RECREATION PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH	4%	12%	32%	42%	20%
(K) SERVICES FOR SENIOR CITIZENS	12%	49%	36%	2%	1%
(L) COUNTY CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT- JAIL OPERATIONS	1%	33%	26%	32%	8%
(M) GIS - (COMPUTER MAPPING SERVICES)	2%	52%	32%	12%	2%
(N) COUNTY ADMINISTRATION	0%	17%	52%	22%	9%
(O) FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR NOT-FOR-PROFITS (GRIT 'N GRACE,CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, ARTS FESTIVAL, ETC)	2%	62%	21%	9%	6%

RESPONDENTS SUPPORTING PROPERTY TAX REFORM IN FLORIDA

**96.9%**

RESPONDENTS THAT BELIEVE THE LEGISLATURE SHOULD NOT HAVE EXCLUDED SCHOOLS FROM THE ROLLBACKS

**71.2%**

### SURVEY INFORMATION

THE SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION IS NOT A SCIENTIFIC STUDY AND IS NOT PRESENTED IN A MANNER TO INDICATE OTHERWISE. ALTHOUGH NOT "SCIENTIFIC" IN NATURE - WE BELIEVE IT IS THE BEST INDICATION OF THE CURRENT CLIMATE CONCERNING PROPERTY TAX REFORM CONDUCTED IN WALTON COUNTY

**WHICH FOUR SERVICES DO YOU THINK ARE**

**MOST IMPORTANT FOR  
WALTON COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

HIGHEST/LOWEST PRIORITY

#1	#2	#3	#4
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT	FIRE & EMS SERVICES	ROADS & BRIDGES	YOUTH RECREATION
#10	#11	#12	#13
LAND DEVELOPMENT & LAND USEAGE	COUNTY ADMINISTRATION	NOT-FOR PROFIT	GIS DEPARTMENT

**OTHER QUESTIONS**

DO YOU THINK THE OFFICIAL WALTON COUNTY WEBSITE IS A GOOD SOURCE OF INFORMATION?	YES 39%	NO 61%	
HAVE YOU EVER ACCESSED OR UTILIZED THE WALTON COUNTY TAXPAYERS WEBSITE?	YES 48%	NO 52%	
DO LOWER PROPERTY TAXES GIVE YOU MORE MONEY TO SPEND?	YES 79%	NO 21%	
COMPARED TO THREE YEARS AGO, DO YOU THINK THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN WALTON COUNTY HAS:	GOTTEN WORSE 23%	STAYED THE SAME 41%	IMPROVED 36%
GENDER	MALE - 49%	FEMALE 51%	

**TAX REFORM SUPPORT LEVELS**

<b>TAX REFORM SUPPORT QUESTIONS:</b>	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE
RATE YOUR SUPPORT LEVEL ON EACH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. PLEASE MARK WHETHER YOU DISAGREE, SOMEWHAT DISAGREE, ARE NEUTRAL, SOMEWHAT AGREE, OR AGREE.					
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS CAN SET THE TONE OF LEADERSHIP BY FIRST LOOKING AT CUTTING EXPENSES WITHIN THEIR AREA OFFICES?	4%	8%	12%	28%	48%
I SUPPORT A TEMPORARY FREEZE ON HIRING NEW EMPLOYEES SO THAT RESIGNATIONS AND RETIREMENTS REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE COUNTY GOVERNMENT WORKFORCE.	22%	11%	19%	23%	25%
EMPLOYEE SALARIES IN THE SAME JOB CATEGORY SHOULD BE CONSISTENT THROUGH OUT ALL COUNTY DEPARTMENTS	22%	16%	31%	12%	21%
I BELIEVE HOMSTEADED PROPERTY OWNERS SHOULD GET MORE OF A TAX CUT THAN NON HOMSTEADED PROPERTY OWNERS.	24%	52%	12%	7%	5%
THE QUALITY AND/OR QUANTITY OF SERVICES I RECEIVE FROM MY LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAVE INCREASED BY THE SAME AMOUNT AS MY PROPERTY TAXES IN THE LAST SIX YEARS.	3%	72%	9%	15%	1%
LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN REDUCE SPENDING WITHOUT CUTTING ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SAFETY FUNDING	8%	9%	6%	18%	59%
I SUPPORT THE LEGISLATURES ACTION TO LIMIT THE ANNUAL GROWTH IN CITY AND COUNTY GOVERNMENTS AD VALOREM TAX COLLECTIONS (NEW CONSTRUCTION + GROWTH IN PERSONAL INCOME)	1%	11%	9%	11%	68%
I THINK COUNTY EMPLOYEES SHOULD PAY A PORTION OF THE COST FOR HIS/HER PERSONAL MEDICAL INSURANCE PREMIUM.	1%	7%	12%	43%	37%
THERE SHOULD BE A CAP ON HOW MUCH THE BUDGET FOR A TAXING AUTHORITY CAN GROW ANNUALLY.	3%	1%	10%	12%	74%
WALTON COUNTY SHOULD ENACT "IMPACT FEES" TO RECOVER THE INFRASTRUCTURE COST ON NEW DEVELOPMENT.	1%	9%	22%	31%	37%
WALTON COUNTY SHOULD WORK TO CONSOLIDATE ALL FIRE AND EMS SERVICES UNDER ONE ORGANIZATION FOR EFFICIENCY IN OPERATIONS AND TO EQUALIZE THE QUALITY OF SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTY.	14%	22%	32%	20%	12%
WALTON COUNTY SHOULD ADOPT A POLICY OF NOT "LOANING MONEY" TO OTHER ENTITIES LIKE THE CITY OF FREEPORT. THAT IS A SERVICE THAT BANKS PROVIDE.	1%	2%	4%	33%	60%

# FINAL MILLAGE RATES FOR 2007-2008

TAXING AUTHORITY	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	% CHANGE THIS YEAR
WALTON COUNTY BCC	5.3633	5.3633	5.3537	5.0650	4.3302	3.8100	3.3708	-11.53%
SCHOOL DISTRICT	7.4420	6.7670	6.2890	5.5690	4.4560	4.1830	4.0470	-3.25%
STATE REQUIRED	4.8650	4.3060	3.8350	3.1240	2.0000	1.7370	1.6960	-2.36%
LOCAL OPTION	2.5770	2.4610	2.4540	2.4450	2.4560	2.4460	2.3510	-3.88%
NWF WATER MGMT.	0.0500	0.0500	0.0500	0.0500	0.0500	0.0500	0.0450	-10.00%
N.WALTON MOSQ.	0.5354	0.5430	0.5982	0.5982	0.5982	0.5980	0.5069	-15.23%
S. WALTON MOSQ.	0.1870	0.1870	0.1926	0.1578	0.1193	0.0950	0.0744	-21.68%
CITY OF FREEPORT	3.9300	3.9300	3.9300	3.9300	3.9300	3.9300	3.9300	0.00%
DEFUNIAK SPRINGS	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.5000	4.4252	-1.66%
SO. WALTON FIRE DISTRICT	0.8300	0.8300	0.8300	0.8300	0.8300	0.8000	0.7000	-12.50%

THE EFFECTS OF THE STATE LEGISLATURES MANDATORY ROLLBACK IN AD VALOREM TAX COLLECTIONS RIPPLED THROUGH ALL TAXING AUTHORITIES, EXCEPT THE CITY OF FREEPORT WHICH OVER-RODE THE 3% ROLLBACK.

THE REQUIRED ROLLBACK RANGED FROM A 9% ROLLBACK FOR THE WALTON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS TO 0.0% PERCENT FOR THE WALTON COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD. THE CITY OF FREEPORT WAS MANDATED TO ROLLBACK THEIR COLLECTIONS BY 3% , BUT USED A PROVISION IN THE LEGISLATION THAT ALLOWED THEM TO "OVERRIDE" THE MANDATE BY A UNANIMOUS VOTE OF THE CITY COUNCIL.

THE CITY OF FREEPORT IS THE ONLY TAXING AUTHORITY IN WALTON COUNTY TO TAKE SUCH ACTION.

ALTHOUGH THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD, WAS EXEMPT FROM ANY

REQUIRED ROLLBACK THEY VOTED TO ROLL BACK THE MILLAGE RATE THAT THEY CONTROL BY 3.88%.

THIS ROLLBACK WAS CHAMPIONED BY SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN MARK DAVIS. WITHOUT HIS LEADERSHIP THERE WOULD BE NO ROLLBACK AND NO BREAK FOR THE TAXPAYERS OF WALTON COUNTY. THE WCTA TIPS ITS HAT OF THANKS TO CHAIRMAN DAVIS.

WE WISH TO ALSO RECOGNIZE THE EFFORTS OF THE SOUTH WALTON MOSQUITO CONTROL DISTRICT AND THE SOUTH WALTON FIRE DISTRICT FOR THEIR BUDGET REDUCTIONS. BOTH TAXING AUTHORITIES WERE UNDER A 3% ROLLBACK MANDATE BUT ACTED IN THE INTEREST OF THE TAXPAYER BY REDUCING THEIR TAX COLLECTIONS SIGNIFICANTLY OVER THE STATE REQUIREMENT.

FOR THEIR ACTIONS THE WCTA WISHES TO NAME THEM BOTH AS

"FRIENDS OF THE TAXPAYER" FOR THE 2007-2008 BUDGET CYCLE.

THERE REMAIN MANY OTHER AVENUES AVAILABLE TO OUR TAXING AUTHORITIES TO CONTROL EXPENDITURES AND PROVIDE NEEDED TAX RELIEF TO THE TAXPAYING CITIZENS OF WALTON COUNTY. WE STAND READY TO CONTINUE OUR VIGILANCE OF EACH TAXING AUTHORITY.



# 'THE EYES AND EARS'



WCTA BOARD MEMBER EMMETT HILDRETH WAS VERY ACTIVE DURING THE DISCUSSIONS



COMMISSIONERS PRIDGEN AND MEADOWS QUESTION THE SHERIFF'S BUDGET PRESENTER



COMMISSIONERS COMANDER AND BRANNON CONSIDER NOT-FOR-PROFITS CUTS



WCTA BOARD MEMBERS HILDRETH AND CONNOR REVIEW THE 2007-2008 BUDGET BOOK

## PLEASE HELP US CONTINUE THE BATTLE

Your generous support of our "Tax Battle" has made it possible for us to work to consistently lower the millage rates in Walton County. Now we are waging a new campaign to place limits on budget growth and spending and to equalize the tax revenues paid by businesses, homestead property and nonhomestead property. Please renew your membership or make a special plus gift so that we can win the "Tax Battle". Fill out this coupon, cut it out and return in the enclosed envelope.

**THANK YOU !**

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

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E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \_\_\_\_\_



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## Sometimes the good one's get away

IT HAS BEEN A PRIVILEGE TO HAVE JB HILLARD AS WCTA VICE PRESIDENT FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS. JB RESIGNED IN JULY BUT WILL REMAIN AN ACTIVE MEMBER. WE ARE NOT LOSING HIS KNOWLEDGE, EXPERTISE, TALENTS OR ENERGY.

THERE IS NO MEASURE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS THAT JB HAS MADE TO WCTA, OUR COMMUNITY, OTHER BOARDS ON WHICH HE SERVES, AND TO OUR COUNTY. JB IS DOWNSIZING HIS COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO CARVE OUT SOME TIME FOR OTHER PURSUITS.

THANK YOU, JB, FOR ORGANIZING MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS, PROVIDING REFRESHMENTS AT BOARD AND MEMBER MEETINGS, CREATING BEAUTIFUL LITERATURE FOR HAND-OUTS, GIVING OUR NEWSLETTER A MODERN AND PROFESSIONAL LOOK WITH LOGOS (WHICH HE CREATED) AND PHOTOGRAPHS (WHICH HE TOOK), REPRESENTING US AT SCHOOL



BOARD MEETINGS, AND, PARTICULARLY, FOR BEING INSTRUMENTAL IN FORMING THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA TAXPAYERS ALLIANCE THIS YEAR.

JB WORKS AND TEACHES AT OKALOOSA-WALTON COLLEGE IN DEFUNIAK SPRINGS. HE IS CURRENTLY PRESIDENT OF THE CHAUTAUQUA CYBER CLUB, CHAIRMAN OF THE WALTON COUNTY COMMITTEE FOR THE SENIOR CENTER IN DEFUNIAK SPRINGS, AND A LICENSED ARBITRATOR FOR THE BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU. JB IS ACTIVE IN DEFUNIAK

SPRINGS CITY GOVERNMENT WHERE HE RECENTLY COORDINATED WITH THE CITY TO GET DEFUNIAK SPRINGS DESIGNATED A "COMMUNITY FOR A LIFETIME" BY THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS.

JB IS PRESIDENT OF THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COMPUTER USER GROUPS. HE REWORKS DONATED

COMPUTERS AND DELIVERS THEM TO LESS FORTUNATE FAMILIES, SCHOOLS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS IN THE PANHANDLE. HIS LATEST VENTURE IS WITH THE FLOWERSVIEW LIBRARY IN PAXTON TO ESTABLISH BASIC COMPUTER TRAINING CLASSES AND PROVIDE FREE COMPUTERS TO RESIDENTS WHO CANNOT AFFORD ONE.

(IF ANYONE WANTS TO DONATE AN OPERABLE COMPUTER, EMAIL: CNC210@MYWAY.COM.)

WCTA IS HONORED THAT JB INCLUDED US IN HIS BUSY LIFE, GIVING HIS TIME AND ADDING QUALITY TO OUR ORGANIZATION. HE HAS EARNED TREMENDOUS RESPECT THROUGHOUT WALTON COUNTY, AND BEYOND.

RONALD REAGAN SAID IN AN INTERVIEW, "YOU ONLY HAVE ONE LIFE; MAKE IT COUNT". THANKS, JB, FOR SHOWING US HOW IT'S DONE.

THANK YOU - JB