What Florida TaxWatch is Doing Now to Help Reform Florida's Property Tax and Local Government Spending Systems

The Florida TaxWatch research team is reviewing and analyzing data to formulate the likely impacts of both the statutory and proposed constitutional reforms on local governments and taxpayers. This will include consideration of the key factors of just value growth and personal income, the effects of local government overrides of property tax caps, the ongoing shift of tax burden from homestead to non-homestead property owners, non-ad valorem tax revenue changes, and the effects of any future increases in the portion of school property taxes mandated by the Legislature.

Florida TaxWatch is also moving ahead to the next step in the process, by advising local governments with a summary "How To Trim" guide to local budgeting and cost savings that provides useful ideas on cutting costs without affecting core services.

Also, through its Center for Local Government Studies, Florida TaxWatch is offering specialized local budget profiles and cost savings analysis to local taxpayer, business, and civic groups, to help in the fight to reduce property taxes and local spending while providing helpful assistance to local officials in implementing those rollbacks and cuts mandated by the Legislature.

"Before they consider reducing levels of services provided to citizens, local governments should make sure they're operating in the most efficient manner possible," according to **Chuck Hefren**, Senior Research Analyst at Florida TaxWatch. "By taking steps to improve efficiencies, local governments can better justify future reductions in services in response to mandated restrictions on its ability to levy property taxes," he said.

With the assistance of its Senior Research Fellows, Florida TaxWatch is identifying practices that local governments can implement to evaluate their operations and determine if each is operating efficiently and effectively today and ensure they continue to do so in the future.

Improving budget processes, accountability, and transparency play a large role in Florida TaxWatch research and recommendations in improving government performance. Two new reports to be released this summer focus on how state government has unprecedented opportunities to increase accountability and achieve cost savings. Many of these recommendations are adaptable to local government operations as well and will be reflected in local research reports.

Future research may also include an examination of unfunded state mandates on local governments and their impacts on local budgeting and taxpayers.

"The next six months will be both very exciting and challenging times for our state and local leaders, taxpayers, and Florida TaxWatch," according to **Dominic M. Calabro**, its President & CEO. "There is no organization which is better suited or positioned for this important task than Florida TaxWatch and whose guidance and assistance the taxpayers of Florida have rightfully come to expect."