

**OPTIONS TO ELIMINATE OR
REDUCE THE PROPERTY
TAX BURDEN ON FLORIDA
HOMEOWNERS**

September 2025





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DEAR FELLOW TAXPAYER,

Property taxes are by far the largest source of tax revenue for Florida's local governments, generating \$55 billion in 2024 for counties, school districts, municipalities, and special districts. Of this total, \$19 billion is paid by Florida homeowners. This revenue funds critical government services such as public safety, fire protection, education, and sanitation. Local governments often enjoy increased property tax revenues without increasing the millage rate, since the value of property usually rises, often significantly, generating millions of dollars in additional property tax revenues.

Unlike consumption-based taxes (e.g., sales taxes), which are measured by voluntary economic activity, property taxes are ongoing obligations, functioning more like annual lease payments to the government. This dynamic has prompted Governor Ron DeSantis to question whether Florida taxpayers should continue to pay "perpetual rent" to the government on property that they already own.

"If you're a Florida resident, and you have a primary residence here, your homesteaded property, I think you should be able to own that free and clear of the government. If you say your personal homesteaded residence can't be subject to property tax... that basically puts a thumb on the scale in favor of traditional homeownership."¹

- Governor Ron DeSantis

This is a fair question, one that requires a reasoned and measured examination. Florida has long been recognized as a leader in advancing responsible fiscal policy and Florida TaxWatch commends the Governor for challenging policy makers to rethink how Florida balances the responsibilities of state and local governments to provide essential services with the promise of true property ownership. Whether the ultimate result is the full repeal of property taxes or targeted relief, state and local governments must collaborate to effectuate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dominic M. Calabro".

Dominic M. Calabro
President & CEO

¹ [8/26/25 Governor's Press Conference on Traffic Congestion Relief - The Florida Channel](#)

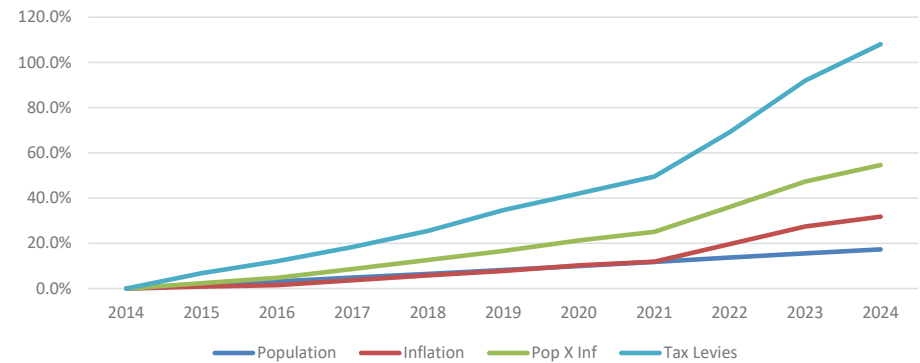
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INTRODUCTION

As shown in Figure 1, over the last decade (2014-2024), total property taxes levied in Florida have increased more than 108 percent, or by \$28.7 billion,² far outpacing 17.5 percent population³ and 31.8 percent inflation growth⁴ (a combined growth rate of 54.9 percent). While this increase is significant statewide, the growth has varied broadly across counties, from a comparatively modest 35.3 percent increase in Washington County to a substantial increase of more than 216 percent in Walton County.⁵ Appendix 1 ranks the counties from largest increase in total property taxes since 2014 to the smallest increase and compares each to a combination population and inflation growth rate. Excluding property taxes levied for school purposes, Florida’s property tax levy has increased by more than 120 percent, or \$18.5 billion, over the same time period.⁶ Rising property taxes, along with home prices and insurance, has made homeownership more elusive, especially for younger people. In 1980, the majority of Floridians became homeowners by age 30. By 2000, it rose to age 34. In 2021, most Floridians had to wait until age 42 to buy a home.⁷

FIGURE 1.
GROWTH IN FLORIDA PROPERTY TAXES, POPULATION, AND INFLATION
2014-2024



Source: Florida TaxWatch, using data from the Florida Department of Revenue and the Office of Economic and Demographic Research, September 2025.

“The family is the foundation of our society and homeownership is the foundation of our economy. Homeownership brings with it a sense of stability and community as well as increased net worth over time. To promote homeownership, or “the American Dream,” is to promote the basic building block of personal wealth.”

- Hon. Jeff Kottkamp,
Executive Vice President and General Counsel,
Florida TaxWatch

² Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, 2014 and 2024 “County Profiles”

³ Florida TaxWatch, using population estimates from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

⁴ Florida Department of Revenue, Save Our Homes (CPI Change and Cap), January 2025.

⁵ Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, 2014 and 2024 “County Profiles”

⁶ Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, 2014 and 2024 “County Profiles”

⁷ Florida TaxWatch, *More States Are Using State-Level Tax Credits to Address Workforce and Affordable Housing Deficits*, March 2025

While affordability is certainly still an issue, state leaders have posed the question of whether Floridians truly own their homes under the current property tax system of perpetual payment to the government. Unlike consumption-based taxes, which are measured by voluntary economic activity, the argument is that property taxes function more like annual lease payments to the government. Property taxes are driven by set millage rates, which are applied to the value of a home, albeit at times heavily adjusted.

In Florida, property taxes are the major source of revenue for local governments which have the responsibility to carry out critical government services like law enforcement, fire protection, schools, and sanitation. These services are for the benefit of communities and society as a whole; however, it is reasonable to ask how a home's market value influences the provision of government services. Is the million dollar home receiving increased services compared to the half a million dollar home? Are homes on the north side receiving increased services from those on the south side?

Property taxes generated \$55 billion in revenue for Florida's local governments in 2024,⁸ so any proposal significantly lowering property taxes will have major impacts and require a comprehensive policy to ensure critical government services are provided. The hundreds of local taxing authorities (e.g., counties, municipalities, water management districts, port authorities, transit authorities, independent special districts, etc.) are all different, with the magnitude of reliance on property taxes varying widely. Local governments have a responsibility to engage in this conversation, providing sound fiscal projections of cost for service. They need to be transparent and knowledgeable about the cost of law enforcement, fire service, and waste pickup. There are arguably no national standards that provide a baseline of necessary service to communities.

Shorter emergency response times are obviously more favorable, but with no benchmarks for best practices, performance is hard to measure. Setting minimum standards of service, tailored to rural, urban, and coastal areas, is a reasonable first step in establishing the needs of Florida's communities. In doing so, state and local governments would gain crucial information in comparing the financial needs of communities with current revenue levels.

Florida leads the nation in conservative fiscal policy. And this is no exception. Florida TaxWatch commends the Governor for driving this conversation and the Florida House of Representatives for forming a select committee on property taxes to educate legislators on the current system and explore possible reforms. Whether the end result is the full repeal of property taxes or simply lowering the burden for homeowners, state and local governments must collaborate to effectuate responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. Since the Florida Constitution governs most of the state's property tax system, significant reform will almost surely require one or more constitutional amendments, ultimately giving voters the last word. Florida TaxWatch undertakes this independent research project to explore options for reducing property tax burdens on Florida homeowners and to identify important considerations when pursuing such options. This list of options is by no means exhaustive but does focus on options that Florida TaxWatch believes provide a reasonable balance between the adequate provision of essential services and true homeownership.

⁸ Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, "2024 County Profiles"

OPTIONS TO ELIMINATE OR LOWER THE TAX BURDEN ON HOMEOWNERS

This report examines five potential approaches to property tax reform for Florida homeowners, ranging from the most significant proposal of eliminating property taxes for eligible homeowners to more immediate measures the Legislature could enact in the 2026 session to bring more transparency and accountability without requiring a constitutional amendment. Options 1 through 4 would require a constitutional amendment with 60 percent of the voters in agreement. Option 5 includes multiple ideas that could be enacted via statutory changes.

OPTION 1. PHASE OUT PROPERTY TAXES FOR FLORIDA HOMEOWNERS

Using 2024 figures, eliminating property taxes for the approximately five million Florida homestead properties would cost local government an estimated \$19 billion.⁹ Under current growth estimates of homestead taxable value, this would grow to approximately \$30 billion by 2030, assuming no change in millage rates.¹⁰

A measured approach is to phase the total elimination over a period of years, providing continued revenue for critical government services for a known time period and allowing state and local governments to plan for the eventual steep reduction in revenue. Implementing the policy prospectively, meaning every homeowner will pay property taxes for the determined period of years upon claiming homestead, would continue to provide a revenue source to local governments, alleviating the need for a drastic increase in new or existing streams of revenue or the possibility of a significant decrease in critical government services. However, this would create an even more complex system, requiring considerable planning by state and local officials to ensure each homestead property is provided with the correct exemption value.

A phased elimination could be accomplished by an annual increase in the homestead exemption, changing it from a dollar amount to a percentage of assessed value. Year 1 of the proposal would be status quo, with the assessed value of each homestead property thereafter frozen at the Year 1 amount and a steadily increasing percentage of the value becoming exempt each year. Adjustments may have to be made to ensure all homestead properties receive a reduction in their property taxes the second year of any phased elimination proposal.¹¹

Policy makers could determine any length of time over which to phase out ad valorem taxes for homestead properties. Below are two proposals for eliminating property tax for homeowners over ten (Table 1) and thirty years (Table 2), based on the assessed value of the five million homestead properties in 2024. Current homestead exemptions total \$286.5 billion, nearly 21 percent of the total assessed value of homestead properties.¹² Under the ten-year plan, increasing the current exemptions to account for 25 percent of the frozen Year 1 assessed value of homestead properties in the second year, and then an incremental ten percent each subsequent year, would eliminate property taxes on the current five million homestead properties in ten years. This phased proposal would provide a \$1 billion tax cut in the second year. Under the 30-year plan, the exemption value rises at a slower pace compared to the ten-year plan, resulting in a steady reduction of \$655.2 million in homestead property taxes annually.

⁹ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025, and Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, “County Overview” and “2024 County Profiles”

¹⁰ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025

¹¹ If a lower value home already has more than the established percent of its assessed value exempt, it would keep its current taxable value.

¹² Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025

TABLE 1.
10-YEAR PHASED ELIMINATION OF HOMESTEAD AD VALOREM TAXES

YEAR AFTER CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PASSAGE OR NEW HOMESTEAD CLAIMED	HOMESTEAD ASSESSED VALUE ¹³	% OF HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION	HOMESTEAD TAXABLE VALUE AFTER EXEMPTIONS	HOMESTEAD AD VALOREM LEVY ¹⁴	HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX REVENUE REDUCTION
1	\$1.4 trillion	21% ¹⁵	\$1.1 trillion	\$19.0 billion	
2	\$1.4 trillion	25%	\$1.0 trillion	\$18.0 billion	\$(1.0 billion)
3	\$1.4 trillion	35%	\$901.0 billion	\$15.6 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
4	\$1.4 trillion	45%	\$762.4 billion	\$13.2 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
5	\$1.4 trillion	55%	\$623.8 billion	\$10.8 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
6	\$1.4 trillion	65%	\$485.2 billion	\$8.4 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
7	\$1.4 trillion	75%	\$346.5 billion	\$6.0 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
8	\$1.4 trillion	85%	\$207.9 billion	\$3.6 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
9	\$1.4 trillion	95%	\$69.3 billion	\$1.2 billion	\$(2.4 billion)
10	\$1.4 trillion	100%	\$0	\$0	\$(1.2 billion)

¹³ Supra, see footnote 12.

¹⁴ Assuming calculated average statewide millage of 17.3 based on 2024 homestead taxable value and ad valorem levy maintained through phase-out.

¹⁵ Supra, see footnote 12.



TABLE 2.
30-YEAR PHASED ELIMINATION OF HOMESTEAD AD VALOREM TAXES

YEAR AFTER CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PASSAGE OR NEW HOMESTEAD CLAIMED	HOMESTEAD ASSESSED VALUE	% OF HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION	HOMESTEAD TAXABLE VALUE AFTER EXEMPTIONS	HOMESTEAD AD VALOREM LEVY	HOMESTEAD PROPERTY TAX REVENUE REDUCTION
1	\$1.4 trillion	21%	\$1.1 trillion	\$19.0 billion	
2	\$1.4 trillion	23.4%	\$1.1 trillion	\$18.3 billion	\$(655.2 million)
3	\$1.4 trillion	26.1%	\$1.0 trillion	\$17.7 billion	\$(655.2 million)
4	\$1.4 trillion	28.9%	\$986.0 billion	\$17.0 billion	\$(655.2 million)
5	\$1.4 trillion	31.6%	\$948.0 billion	\$16.4 billion	\$(655.2 million)
6	\$1.4 trillion	34.3%	\$910.1 billion	\$15.7 billion	\$(655.2 million)
7	\$1.4 trillion	37.1%	\$872.2 billion	\$15.1 billion	\$(655.2 million)
8	\$1.4 trillion	39.8%	\$834.3 billion	\$14.4 billion	\$(655.2 million)
9	\$1.4 trillion	42.6%	\$796.3 billion	\$13.8 billion	\$(655.2 million)
10	\$1.4 trillion	45.3%	\$758.4 billion	\$13.1 billion	\$(655.2 million)
11	\$1.4 trillion	48.0%	\$720.5 billion	\$12.4 billion	\$(655.2 million)
12	\$1.4 trillion	50.8%	\$682.6 billion	\$11.8 billion	\$(655.2 million)
13	\$1.4 trillion	53.5%	\$644.7 billion	\$11.1 billion	\$(655.2 million)
14	\$1.4 trillion	56.2%	\$606.7 billion	\$10.5 billion	\$(655.2 million)
15	\$1.4 trillion	59.0%	\$568.8 billion	\$9.8 billion	\$(655.2 million)
16	\$1.4 trillion	61.7%	\$530.9 billion	\$9.2 billion	\$(655.2 million)
17	\$1.4 trillion	64.4%	\$493.0 billion	\$8.5 billion	\$(655.2 million)
18	\$1.4 trillion	67.2%	\$455.1 billion	\$7.9 billion	\$(655.2 million)
19	\$1.4 trillion	69.9%	\$417.1 billion	\$7.2 billion	\$(655.2 million)
20	\$1.4 trillion	72.6%	\$379.2 billion	\$6.6 billion	\$(655.2 million)
21	\$1.4 trillion	75.4%	\$341.3 billion	\$5.9 billion	\$(655.2 million)
22	\$1.4 trillion	78.1%	\$303.4 billion	\$5.2 billion	\$(655.2 million)
23	\$1.4 trillion	80.9%	\$265.4 billion	\$4.6 billion	\$(655.2 million)
24	\$1.4 trillion	83.6%	\$227.5 billion	\$3.9 billion	\$(655.2 million)
25	\$1.4 trillion	86.3%	\$189.6 billion	\$3.3 billion	\$(655.2 million)
26	\$1.4 trillion	89.1%	\$151.7 billion	\$2.6 billion	\$(655.2 million)
27	\$1.4 trillion	91.8%	\$113.8 billion	\$2.0 billion	\$(655.2 million)
28	\$1.4 trillion	94.5%	\$75.8 billion	\$1.3 billion	\$(655.2 million)
29	\$1.4 trillion	97.3%	\$37.9 billion	\$655.2 million	\$(655.2 million)
30	\$1.4 trillion	100.0%	\$0	\$0	\$(655.2 million)

When reading Tables 1 and 2:

- **Year 1** would be the first tax year after passage of a constitutional amendment for the existing homestead properties. For example, if a constitutional amendment phasing out property taxes for homeowners passed during the 2026 election, Year 1 would be 2027. The first incremental increase in exemption value would begin in Year 2, which would be 2028 in this example.
 - » New property owners would begin their phased payment of property taxes in the year homestead is claimed.
- **Homestead Assessed Value** is the total homestead property market value minus the Save Our Homes differential, frozen at Year 1. In Tables 1 and 2, the 2024 total assessed value of homestead properties is used for illustrative purposes.
- **Percent of Homestead Exemption** is the reduction in the assessed value. Year 1 begins in status quo, with the current homestead exemption percentage being applied to the assessed value. The exemption percentage will grow incrementally over whatever phased term is implemented. In Tables 1 and 2, the 2024 percentage of homestead exemptions is used in Year 1 for illustrative purposes.
- **Homestead Taxable Value After Exemptions** is the value of the homestead properties after the homestead exemption percentage is applied.
- **Homestead Ad Valorem Levy** is the estimated amount of property taxes Florida’s local governments will collect statewide based on a calculated statewide millage applied to the Homestead Taxable Value After Exemptions.
- **Homestead Property Tax Reduction** is the decreased amount of ad valorem levy collected by Florida’s local governments due to the increasing homestead exemption percentage.

$$\underbrace{\left(\underbrace{\text{Assessed Value}}_{\text{What your home is worth}} - \underbrace{\text{Exemption}}_{\text{Your "I live here" discount}} \right)}_{\text{This becomes your Taxable Value}} \times \underbrace{\text{Millage Rate}}_{\text{The local tax rate}} = \underbrace{\text{Ad Valorem Levy}}_{\text{Your final tax bill}}$$

OPTION 1

<i>BENEFITS</i>	VS	<i>RISKS</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Incentivizes homeownership by making the American Dream more affordable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Established timeline of continued revenue to local governments, enabling strategic planning for reduced budgets</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Redefines true property ownership</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Increased discretionary spending for eligible homeowners, stimulating economy</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Significant reduction of the major revenue source for local governments</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Without a comprehensive plan, critical government services like public safety could be negatively impacted</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Without corresponding policy, taxes could be shifted to non-homestead properties</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Complex implementation and administration for state and local officials</p>

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OPTION 2. PRIORITIZE ELIMINATING PROPERTY TAXES FOR SENIOR FLORIDIAN HOMEOWNERS

Florida has one of the highest populations of seniors in the nation, with 22.7 percent of the total state population aged 65 and older.¹⁶ Continually rising property taxes place even more burden on retirees living on fixed incomes. To assist Florida's elderly population maintain fiscal stability and remain in their homes as long as physically able, any phased proposal to eliminate property taxes for homeowners could be retroactive for senior citizens aged 65 years and older, allowing prior years to count towards the total number of years outlined. For example, under the ten-year phased elimination proposal, eligible seniors who have claimed homestead in Florida for at least ten years would receive a 100 percent exemption of their home's assessed value in the first year.

The senior homestead exemption currently totals \$8.3 billion, 0.6 percent of the total assessed value of homestead properties.¹⁷ Since the senior exemption is not uniformly offered statewide and is income limited, it is likely not a realistic representation of Florida homeowners aged 65 and older. 2023 data indicates nearly 19 percent of the state's total population are homeowners aged 65 and older.¹⁸ Assuming the entire 19 percent of eligible aged homeowners have claimed homestead for the determined number of years, an estimated \$3.6 billion in property tax revenue could be eliminated immediately under a proposal that grandfathers in years of claimed homestead for Floridians aged 65 and older.¹⁹ As with all options presented, policy makers could determine the age and years of homestead eligibility requirements.

The Florida House of Representatives Select Committee on Property Taxes has discussed a similar proposal that would create a \$1 million homestead exemption for homeowners aged 65 and older.²⁰

OPTION 2	
<i>BENEFITS</i>	<i>RISKS</i>
Increased financial stability to eligible seniors on fixed incomes, freeing up funds to use on other expenses like healthcare and groceries	Potential significant loss of revenue for local governments
Greater opportunity for retired eligible Floridians on fixed incomes to remain in their homes	Without a comprehensive plan, critical government services like public safety could be negatively impacted
Provides increased discretionary spending for eligible seniors, stimulating economy	Without corresponding policy, taxes could be shifted to non-homestead properties

Florida TaxWatch

¹⁶ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, April 1, 2025 Population Projections

¹⁷ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025, and Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, "2024 Exemption Values"

¹⁸ Shimberg Center for Housing Studies, "Population and Household Projections, Households by Tenure and Age of Householder, 2023 Estimates" and Office of Economic and Demographic Research, April 1, 2025 Population Projections

¹⁹ Calculated based off 2024 estimated \$19 billion homestead ad valorem levy and 18.9% population aged 65 and older

²⁰ Florida House of Representatives News Release, "Florida House Forms Select Committee Targeting Property Tax Relief for Homeowners," dated April 29, 2025

OPTION 3. ELIMINATE PROPERTY TAXES FOR FLORIDA HOMEOWNERS, EXCEPT FOR SCHOOL PROPERTY TAXES

School ad valorem taxes generate \$21.5 billion for school districts.²¹ Approximately \$13.7 billion of this total pays for almost half of the state’s \$29.5 billion Florida Education Finance Program, which funds the state’s K-12 public schools.²² The Legislature sets the Required Local Effort (RLE) millage rate each year, and local governments are all but required to adopt the rate in order to receive state funding. The RLE is not subject to several exemptions, including the second homestead exemption and the ten percent increase cap on non-homestead properties.

Florida homesteaded properties account for approximately one-third of the total school taxable value, generating an estimated \$7 billion in school ad valorem taxes.²³ In order to maintain funding for schools, policy makers could determine to keep all school levies in effect and only eliminate non-school property taxes. Using 2024 figures, a phased elimination of all non-school ad valorem taxes for the approximately five million Florida homestead properties would ultimately cost local governments an estimated \$12 billion over the determined time period.²⁴

OPTION 3	
<i>BENEFITS</i>	<i>RISKS</i>
Incentivizes homeownership by making the American Dream more affordable	Significant reduction of the major revenue source for local governments, besides school districts
Maintains funding for Florida’s public schools, ensuring Florida’s students are afforded a quality, free education as required in the state constitution	Without a comprehensive plan, critical government services like public safety could be negatively impacted
Avoids complex statutory revision to school funding formula	Without corresponding policy, taxes could be shifted to non-homestead properties

Florida TaxWatch

21 Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, “2024 County Profiles”

22 2025 Senate Bill 2502 incorporates by reference, “Public School Funding: The Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP),” dated June 13, 2025.

23 Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025, and Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, “2024 County Profiles”

24 Ibid.

OPTION 4. LOWER PROPERTY TAXES FOR FLORIDA HOMEOWNERS

A proposal to simply lower a property owner's tax liability is to provide each property in the state with a set percent reduction of the previous year's assessed value and require all local governments to adopt the previous year's millage rates over a determined period of time. For example, over the next five years, local governments must adopt the roll-back rate, with the set percent reduction added back for the calculation.


This would create a guaranteed, definite reduction for taxpayers that could not be reduced by millage hikes. This exemption could apply to all property types, or the Legislature could limit it to homesteads. If limited to homesteads, this proposal would ensure the reduced tax burden would not shift to other property owners. Policy makers can choose the percentage reduction that achieves the desired amount of tax savings. A 20 percent exemption for all property would save \$11.0 billion annually, or \$3.8 billion if only homesteads were given the exemption.

Example: A home with an assessed value of \$400,000 has a \$350,000 taxable value after deducting the homestead exemptions. Applying the statewide average millage of 16.35 mills results in a tax bill of \$5,722. If the Legislature were to decide to provide a 20 percent exemption on last year's assessed value, the home would have an assessed value of \$320,000 and a taxable value of \$270,000. Since millage rates are frozen, the tax would now be \$4,414, a savings of \$1,308.

OPTION 4

BENEFITS **VS** ***RISKS***

<p style="text-align: center;">Incentivizes homeownership by making the American Dream more affordable</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Provides certainty to the Legislature, local governments, and taxpayers in what the tax savings/revenue reductions would be</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ensures that if the new exemption was only given to homestead properties, tax burden would not be shifted to non-homestead properties</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Loss of revenue for local governments</p> <p style="text-align: center;">•</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Without a comprehensive plan, critical government services like public safety could be negatively impacted</p>
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OPTION 5. STATUTORY CHANGES TO BRING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN 2026

While eliminating or significantly reducing property taxes would likely require a constitutional amendment, the Legislature has broad statutory authority to reform the property tax process and could enact targeted policies in the 2026 Legislative Session that aim to rein in revenue growth and increase transparency:

- **Establish the Rolled-Back Rate as the Default Millage Rate** – An average of five counties, out of 67, have adopted the rolled-back (or lower) millage rate over the last five years.²⁵ Requiring proposed budgets to be based on the rolled-back rate would force taxing authorities to transparently justify any increase, rather than start with a presumption of automatic revenue growth. Statutory language could: Require taxing authorities to base their tentative budgets on revenues generated by the rolled-back rate, which reflects the prior year’s tax revenues adjusted for new construction.
 - » Require taxing authorities to base their tentative budgets on revenues generated by the rolled-back rate, which reflects the prior year’s tax revenues adjusted for new construction.
 - » Require any proposed increases above the tentative budget to be presented as amendments, with a computed millage rate necessary to fund the tentative budget plus amendments.
- **Strengthen Truth in Millage (TRIM) Notice Requirements** – Property appraisers mail out TRIM notices in August, summarizing a property owner’s tax liability based on proposed millage rates. Chapter 200, Florida Statutes, dictates the information required to be on TRIM notices. In order to provide property owners with stronger transparency into how local governments are balancing natural growth of the tax base with additional tax rate increases, the Legislature could expand existing TRIM requirements by:
 - » Displaying total revenue generated from both the rolled-back rate and proposed millage rate for each taxing authority. While a proposed rate increase might appear minor to a single homeowner (e.g., under \$100), it often represents millions in additional revenue county-wide.

» Displaying the taxable value added to the tax roll via new construction and property improvements, in order for property owners to distinguish between the natural growth of the tax base and calculated tax increases.

- **Establish Critical Service Standards and Best Practices for Local Governments** – The Legislature could direct an appropriate state office, such as the Office of Economic and Demographic Research or Department of Financial Services, to establish minimum standards of critical government service and/or recommend best practices for local governments, with guidelines tailored to urban, rural, and coastal communities. Providing statewide benchmarks allows taxing authorities to ensure funding levels are justified by essential services and allows Florida property owners to objectively measure whether higher millage rates correspond to higher or better-quality services.
- **Eliminate or Reduce the Required Local Effort (RLE), the Millage Set by the Legislature for School Funding** – A Florida property appraiser has offered a phased elimination of the RLE, arguing that the tax itself may violate the state constitution’s prohibition of a state ad valorem tax.²⁶ This proposal is similar to the phased elimination proposals offered above in Option 1, capping the RLE at \$10 billion and then reducing the cap by \$1 billion each year over the next ten years.
 - » The Florida Constitution expressly requires the provision of free public schools and authorizes school districts to levy ad valorem taxes, with each school board setting the millage rate within prescribed limits. The weight given to providing adequate school funding is further evidenced by the multiple exemptions of school ad valorem levies, including the constitutional exemption from the non-homestead assessment limitation, emphasizing the importance of public education over property tax limitations. Consequently, the elimination of the RLE, whether by itself or in conjunction with all homestead property taxes, without simultaneous statutory revision for the ad valorem levy limitations of school districts, will shift the entire constitutional obligation of providing a “uniform, efficient, safe, secure, and high quality system of free public schools”²⁷ to the state.

²⁵ Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, 2020-2024 “County Compliance with Maximum Millage Levy Calculation”

²⁶ [Matt Caldwell: The smartest tax cut Florida can make](#)

²⁷ Art. IX, §1(a), Fla. Const.

OPTION 5	
BENEFITS	RISKS
Provides targeted statutory action to provide transparency and accountability to taxpayers in the property tax process	State and local officials would have limited time to implement changes enacted during 2026 Legislative Session before the tax year process began

CONSIDERATIONS FOR ANY ITERATION OF ELIMINATING PROPERTY TAXES

- **Administrative Procedures** – Options 1 through 4 could create a more complex system for state and local levels of government to administer the levying of property taxes. At the very least, it will be a complicated transition that will require strong fiscal management at all levels.
- **Portability** – Policy makers will need to determine whether any proposal attaches to the homeowner or the property, essentially determining whether a homeowner can transfer any accumulated tax savings to a new home. Currently, someone selling their homestead property may transfer the difference between the just value and assessed value of the home (from the Save Our Homes assessment limitation) to a new home. The transfer is limited to \$500,000 and the owner must buy a new homestead within three years.

- **Prohibit Tax Shift to Non-Homestead Properties** – Florida TaxWatch research has historically highlighted the inequities of Florida’s property tax system, reasoning that reductions in the property tax burden for homeowners are largely a tax shift to non-homestead properties. In order to mitigate the impact on non-homestead taxpayers, tighter restrictions on increasing the millage rates for non-homestead properties should be considered along with any proposal to significantly reduce property taxes for homeowners. In addition, the three percent Save Our Homes assessment cap could be applied to non-homestead properties to shield a greater percentage of rising property values from taxation. Florida TaxWatch intends to explore in a subsequent paper these “Save Our Property Taxpayers” proposals that aim to create greater equity to all property owners.
- **Fiscally Constrained Counties** – Florida’s 29 fiscally constrained counties deserve special consideration, having limited revenue generating capacity. There is precedent in Florida law for the state appropriating funding to fiscally constrained counties to offset property tax reductions resulting from enacted constitutional amendments.²⁸ Using 2024 figures, there are approximately 214,000 homestead properties in fiscally constrained counties generating approximately \$300 million in ad valorem revenue annually.²⁹ The legislature could appropriate funding to offset any reduction in ad valorem revenue experienced by fiscally constrained counties under any proposal to eliminate or reduce homestead property taxes.

²⁸ § 218.12, Fla. Stat. (2025).

²⁹ Office of Economic and Demographic Research, Ad Valorem Estimating Conference, March 2025, and Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, “County Overview” and “2024 County Profiles”

CONCLUSIONS

There is no doubt that local governments will be affected by any comprehensive lowering of property tax revenue. Florida's local governments bear the fiscal burden of many critical government services, like law enforcement, fire service, and sanitation.

At the same time, ad valorem revenue has risen more than 108 percent statewide over ten years, with only a nine percent increase in the total number of properties.³⁰ This growth is due more to increased property values, rather than new construction. This growth even outpaces the combined statewide growth of population and inflation over the same time period (54.9 percent),³¹ demonstrating that increases in property tax often exceeds the growth in the cost of delivering government services.

The argument to offset any reduction in ad valorem taxes with an equal increase in the sales tax is an easy option but fails to drive meaningful reform. While it does address the raised fairness question by being consumption based, it does not force local governments to continually audit themselves to provide the most accountability to Floridians.

The benefit of a phased reduction of property tax for homeowners is that government has time to assess what level of funding is really needed to provide critical services to Floridians. The first step is to know what is currently being funded. Florida has commendably begun to “DOGE” itself, with the Governor's Department of Government Efficiency auditing local governments. Beyond identifying efficiencies, and hopefully eliminating unnecessary or wasteful spending, these audits should provide statewide transparency of the level of critical expenditures. This enables an opportunity to compare and establish standards of service, tailored to rural, urban, and coastal areas.

With a known fiscal foundation and transparent service standards, strategic and responsible fiscal policy can be shaped more confidently. Local governments will have the data to bring specific tax increases or bond referenda to the voters or to support requests for statutory flexibility to the legislature.

Florida is typically leading the conversation of any major policy shift and now has the opportunity to lead again with bold property tax reform. Florida TaxWatch applauds the Governor and Legislature for taking on this conversation. Our nation's founders envisioned the right to own property as a basic tenet of freedom. It is central to the American Dream and Florida can be the blueprint for making the American Dream more attainable by redefining true ownership of property in America.

Since 2006, Florida voters have seen 17 constitutional amendments regarding property taxes sponsored by the Florida Legislature on their ballots, the majority focused on increased homestead exemptions.³² This historical piecemeal approach to alleviating the property tax burden on homeowners through new homestead exemptions is subjective to political priorities, offering only temporary, uneven relief. The intersection of property taxes and true homeownership provides a pivotal opportunity for policy makers to pursue significant reform that could impact millions of Floridians and incentivize homeownership, a critical step toward achieving the American Dream.

Whatever policy is ultimately put forward for voters to decide should be comprehensive and strategic, engage both state and local governments to ensure a smooth transition and implementation, uninterrupted delivery of critical government services like public safety and education, and provide safeguards against excessively raising millage rates for non-homestead property.

³⁰ Florida Department of Revenue, Data Book, 2014 and 2024 “County Profiles”

³¹ Calculation by Florida TaxWatch using inflation and county population data from the Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

³² Florida Department of State's Division of Elections, Initiatives/Amendments/Revisions Database, retrieved from <https://dos.elections.myflorida.com/initiatives>, accessed on September 11, 2025.

APPENDIX 1. COUNTY PROPERTY TAX GROWTH VS. POPULATION AND INFLATION

2014 to 2024

RANK	COUNTY	TAX GROWTH	POPULATION AND INFLATION
1	Walton	216.1%	90.4%
2	Pasco	169.2%	70.2%
3	Osceola	157.3%	96.9%
4	Nassau	147.4%	78.4%
5	Saint Lucie	146.2%	75.9%
6	Manatee	145.8%	74.7%
7	Saint Johns	139.5%	103.3%
8	Charlotte	137.8%	67.7%
9	Marion	135.5%	61.4%
10	Gulf	134.7%	37.6%
11	Polk	133.8%	72.0%
12	Orange	132.3%	60.7%
13	Okeechobee	131.5%	35.7%
14	Lake	130.7%	78.2%
15	Flagler	119.5%	78.8%
16	Hillsborough	118.5%	58.1%
17	Sumter	118.5%	92.1%
18	Hernando	114.6%	56.7%
19	Miami-Dade	109.7%	42.6%
20	Sarasota	109.2%	62.2%
	Statewide	108.1%	54.9%
21	Clay	107.4%	57.2%

RANK	COUNTY	TAX GROWTH	POPULATION AND INFLATION
22	Putnam	106.9%	37.9%
23	Collier	105.6%	60.7%
24	Duval	103.0%	55.3%
25	Bay	100.5%	50.9%
26	Hendry	100.4%	58.7%
27	Broward	100.3%	44.0%
28	Palm Beach	99.4%	48.2%
29	Gilchrist	99.2%	52.2%
30	Monroe	97.8%	44.8%
31	Pinellas	96.4%	38.4%
32	Santa Rosa	93.5%	68.4%
33	Lee	93.3%	65.0%
34	Brevard	91.0%	54.8%
35	Indian River	90.1%	58.0%
36	Martin	90.1%	45.8%
37	Escambia	84.5%	45.5%
38	Volusia	83.6%	54.3%
39	Glades	80.5%	36.9%
40	Seminole	80.3%	48.9%
41	Okaloosa	80.1%	51.5%
42	Levy	78.2%	47.6%
43	DeSoto	77.7%	39.0%

RANK	COUNTY	TAX GROWTH	POPULATION AND INFLATION
44	Alachua	74.9%	52.9%
45	Franklin	74.6%	46.0%
46	Suwannee	73.5%	40.9%
47	Wakulla	72.7%	56.0%
48	Baker	71.2%	41.0%
49	Leon	70.3%	42.4%
50	Citrus	69.1%	53.1%
51	Gadsden	63.1%	27.2%
52	Bradford	63.0%	32.9%
53	Jefferson	62.3%	41.4%
54	Hardee	59.9%	27.2%
55	Madison	58.3%	30.8%
56	Highlands	56.3%	41.8%
57	Columbia	55.6%	40.3%
58	Dixie	54.3%	41.7%
59	Jackson	51.3%	30.0%
60	Union	50.9%	33.9%
61	Hamilton	48.2%	33.2%
62	Liberty	47.4%	26.0%
63	Calhoun	45.8%	26.4%
64	Taylor	45.6%	26.9%
65	Lafayette	43.0%	31.1%
66	Holmes	40.1%	33.3%
67	Washington	35.3%	40.1%

Includes all taxing jurisdictions in each county (counties, cities, school districts and special districts).

APPENDIX 2. PER CAPITA TOTAL PROPERTY TAX LEVIES

FY 2024-25

RANK	COUNTY	DOLLARS
1	Monroe	\$4,873.55
2	Walton	\$4,836.82
3	Collier	\$3,828.88
4	Palm Beach	\$3,741.67
5	Martin	\$3,656.86
6	Miami-Dade	\$3,361.84
7	Broward	\$3,067.43
8	Franklin	\$3,061.97
9	Gulf	\$2,966.54
10	Sarasota	\$2,884.84
11	Nassau	\$2,721.28
12	Pinellas	\$2,607.02
13	Orange	\$2,601.85
14	Charlotte	\$2,564.51
15	Indian River	\$2,537.54
16	Lee	\$2,498.43
	Statewide	\$2,397.57
17	Manatee	\$2,369.91
18	Saint Lucie	\$2,347.05
19	Saint Johns	\$2,209.22
20	Flagler	\$2,176.86
21	Bay	\$2,025.78
22	Hillsborough	\$1,991.91

RANK	COUNTY	DOLLARS
23	Duval	\$1,896.90
24	Volusia	\$1,876.63
25	Osceola	\$1,804.17
26	Putnam	\$1,765.46
27	Alachua	\$1,713.68
28	Hendry	\$1,698.11
29	Okaloosa	\$1,669.27
30	Seminole	\$1,665.84
31	Okeechobee	\$1,645.69
32	Sumter	\$1,644.36
33	Brevard	\$1,608.78
34	Glades	\$1,601.41
35	Hardee	\$1,591.66
36	Pasco	\$1,560.82
37	Lake	\$1,536.23
38	Leon	\$1,529.18
39	Hamilton	\$1,494.90
40	Taylor	\$1,470.56
41	Citrus	\$1,458.57
42	Marion	\$1,382.69
43	Escambia	\$1,296.39
44	Polk	\$1,295.30
45	DeSoto	\$1,277.83

RANK	COUNTY	DOLLARS
46	Hernando	\$1,271.59
47	Clay	\$1,251.60
48	Highlands	\$1,155.25
49	Levy	\$1,134.99
50	Gilchrist	\$1,117.33
51	Santa Rosa	\$1,088.63
52	Jefferson	\$1,056.10
53	Madison	\$1,052.08
54	Suwannee	\$1,013.81
55	Dixie	\$929.59
56	Columbia	\$926.44
57	Bradford	\$918.78
58	Gadsden	\$881.14
59	Wakulla	\$868.66
60	Baker	\$825.14
61	Washington	\$778.75
62	Calhoun	\$757.03
63	Lafayette	\$727.64
64	Liberty	\$719.91
65	Jackson	\$695.76
66	Holmes	\$516.83
67	Union	\$415.94

Includes all taxing jurisdictions in each county (counties, cities, school districts and special districts).

APPENDIX 3. CHANGE IN TOTAL COUNTY MILLAGE OVER TEN YEARS

2014 to 2024

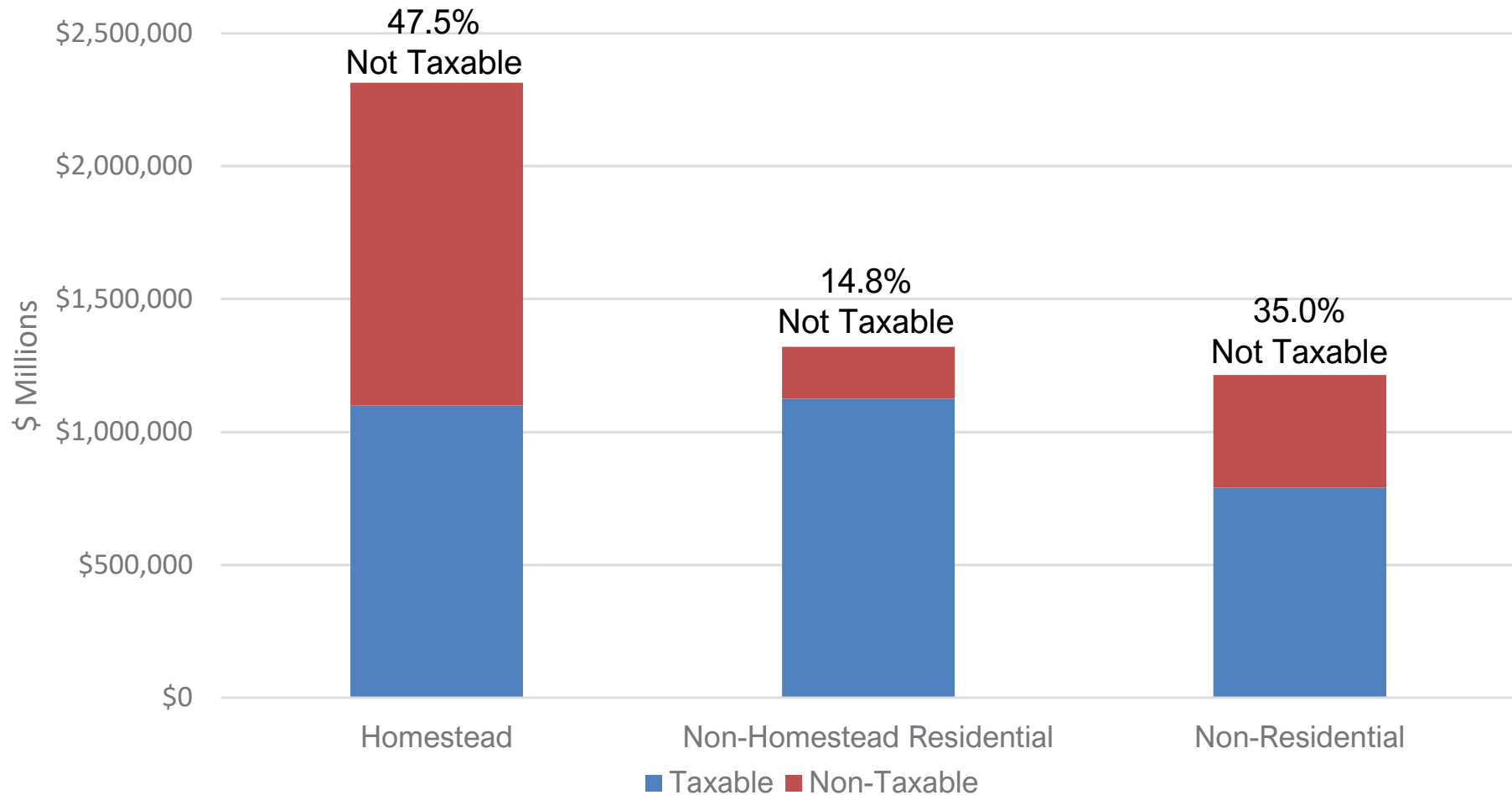
RANK	COUNTY	2014 MILLAGE	2024 MILLAGE	INCREASE
1	Orange	18.1734	21.3187	3.1453
2	Pasco	17.2550	17.3368	0.0818
3	Marion	16.3824	16.1672	-0.2152
4	Clay	15.9039	15.2732	-0.6307
5	Martin	17.3956	16.7269	-0.6687
6	Nassau	17.0696	16.3817	-0.6879
7	Bay	13.4447	12.6726	-0.7721
8	Lafayette	17.0991	16.2550	-0.8441
9	Jackson	15.1186	14.2248	-0.8938
10	Leon	18.7106	17.7998	-0.9108
11	Broward	20.8988	19.8302	-1.0686
12	Walton	10.3522	9.2545	-1.0977
13	Gadsden	17.3971	16.2562	-1.1409
14	Saint Lucie	22.7153	21.5612	-1.1541
15	Bradford	17.7829	16.5906	-1.1923
16	Hernando	16.3697	15.1245	-1.2452
17	Duval	19.1386	17.8913	-1.2473
18	Putnam	18.4983	17.0695	-1.4288
19	Sumter	12.6176	11.1557	-1.4619
20	Okaloosa	13.7404	12.2670	-1.4734
21	DeSoto	17.8006	16.2845	-1.5161
22	Charlotte	17.3363	15.7775	-1.5588
23	Holmes	16.7979	15.2000	-1.5979

RANK	COUNTY	2014 MILLAGE	2024 MILLAGE	INCREASE
24	Glades	19.8685	18.2563	-1.6122
25	Manatee	16.3337	14.6499	-1.6838
26	Monroe	9.9203	8.2286	-1.6917
27	Collier	11.4896	9.7402	-1.7494
28	Dixie	21.3917	19.6363	-1.7554
29	Hamilton	18.3745	16.6089	-1.7656
30	Dade	20.2134	18.4427	-1.7707
31	Taylor	17.0471	15.2264	-1.8207
32	Suwannee	17.7437	15.9178	-1.8259
33	Sarasota	14.5743	12.7168	-1.8575
34	Gilchrist	17.7277	15.8371	-1.8906
35	Polk	17.2743	15.3806	-1.8937
36	Osceola	16.8070	14.8758	-1.9312
37	Union	18.6672	16.6983	-1.9689
38	Lake	17.7970	15.8028	-1.9942
	Statewide	18.3703	16.3624	-2.0080
39	Calhoun	17.3354	15.3210	-2.0144
40	Citrus	17.5684	15.5066	-2.0618
41	Escambia	15.7669	13.6696	-2.0973
42	Hillsborough	20.0872	17.9860	-2.1012
43	Seminole	16.9350	14.8177	-2.1173
44	Santa Rosa	14.2870	12.1384	-2.1486
45	Levy	17.7803	15.5956	-2.1847

RANK	COUNTY	2014 MILLAGE	204 MILL-AGE	INCREASE
46	Indian River	16.4959	14.1617	-2.3342
47	Flagler	19.6578	17.2605	-2.3973
48	Baker	17.0941	14.6367	-2.4574
49	Liberty	17.7864	15.3141	-2.4723
50	Highlands	16.9521	14.4000	-2.5521
51	Gulf	15.2510	12.6986	-2.5524
52	Jefferson	16.9151	14.2038	-2.7113
53	Palm Beach	20.2224	17.4429	-2.7795
54	Saint Johns	15.8515	13.0651	-2.7864
55	Pinellas	20.8804	18.0621	-2.8183
56	Hardee	17.5040	14.6002	-2.9038
57	Alachua	23.8252	20.8095	-3.0157
58	Columbia	17.7768	14.7596	-3.0172
59	Franklin	13.8419	10.6975	-3.1444
60	Washington	17.9397	14.5767	-3.3630
61	Madison	18.8885	15.4189	-3.4696
62	Lee	17.5672	14.0306	-3.5366
63	Okeechobee	18.1829	14.5023	-3.6806
64	Wakulla	17.1159	13.3851	-3.7308
65	Hendry	21.2557	17.1788	-4.0769
66	Brevard	18.8053	14.7030	-4.1023
67	Volusia	22.7692	17.6266	-5.1426

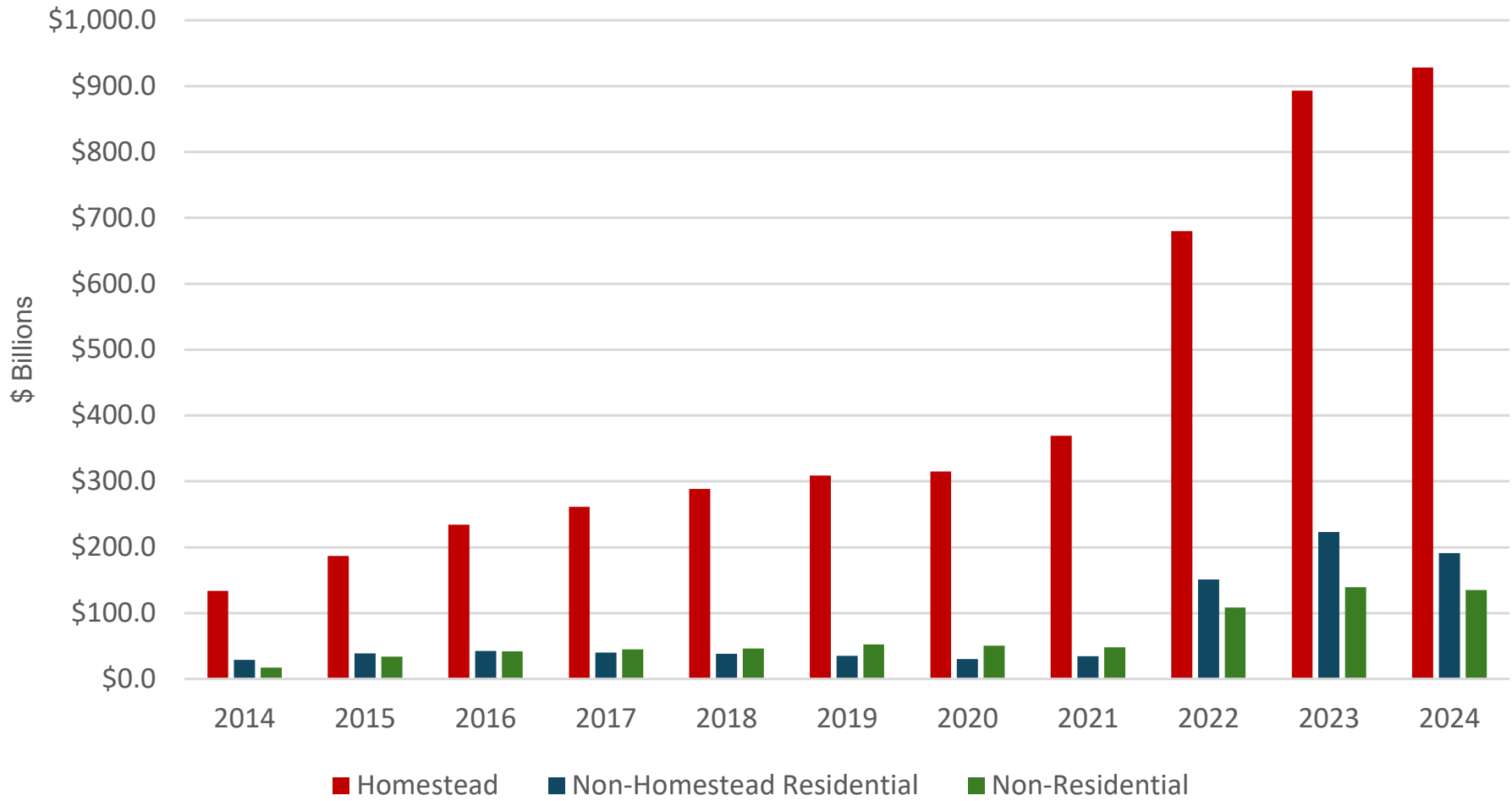
Includes all taxing jurisdictions in each county (counties, cities, school districts and special districts).

APPENDIX 4. PERCENT OF JUST VALUE THAT IS NOT TAXABLE

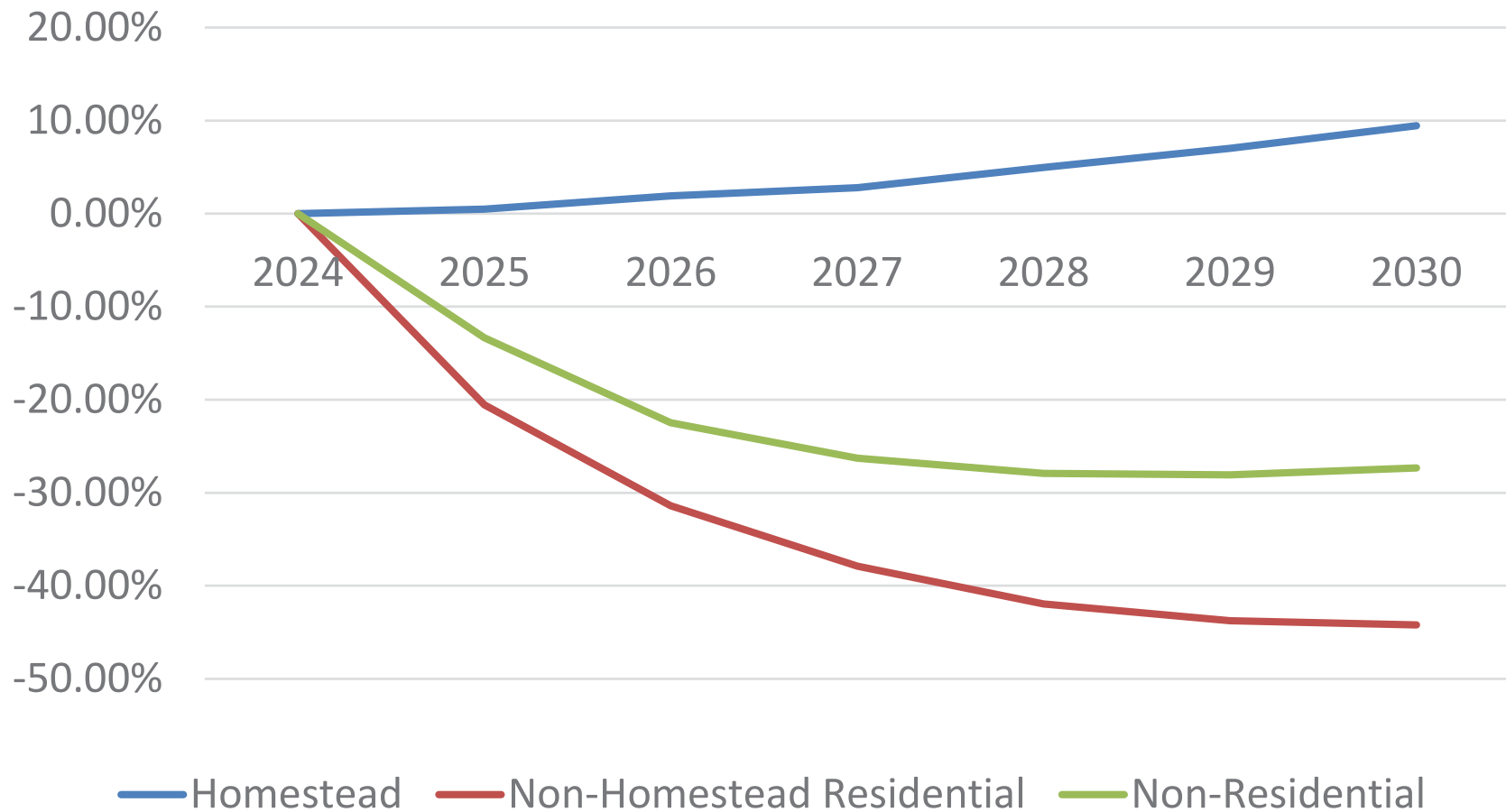


Includes all taxing jurisdictions in each county (counties, cities, school districts and special districts).

APPENDIX 5. SAVE OUR HOMES VS. NON-HOMESTEAD CAP DIFFERENTIALS TAXABLE VALUE



APPENDIX 6. ESTIMATED GROWTH IN THE SAVE OUR HOMES AND NON-HOMESTEAD CAP DIFFERENTIALS



ABOUT FLORIDA TAXWATCH

As an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit taxpayer research institute and government watchdog, it is the mission of Florida TaxWatch to provide the taxpayers of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and analysis of issues related to state and local government taxation, expenditures, policies, and programs. Florida TaxWatch works to improve the productivity and accountability of Florida government. Its research recommends productivity enhancements and explains the statewide impact of fiscal and economic policies and practices on citizens and businesses.

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The findings in this Report are based on the data and sources referenced. Florida TaxWatch research is conducted with every reasonable attempt to verify the accuracy and reliability of the data, and the calculations and assumptions made herein. Please contact us if you believe that this paper contains any factual inaccuracies.

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