

Holding the Line On Sumter's Taxes

For the second year in a row, the county ranks No. 4 on the state's list of lowest property tax rates.

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THE VILLAGES

Sumter County has maintained its No. 4 spot on the list of the Florida counties with the lowest property tax rates.

For the second year in a row, Sumter's property tax millage rate, 12.2617 mills in 2015, is the fourth-lowest in the state, according to the Florida

Department of Revenue. One mill represents \$1 per every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

The counties with cheaper rates were Monroe County, with a total rate of 9.5939; Walton County, 10.2068 mills; and Collier County, 11.3607 mills.

What's more, for 11 consecutive years, the Sumter County Commission has held the line on property taxes.

Please See **TAXES, C10**

TRI-COUNTY RANKINGS

SUMTER COUNTY

4th

Property Tax millage:
12.2617

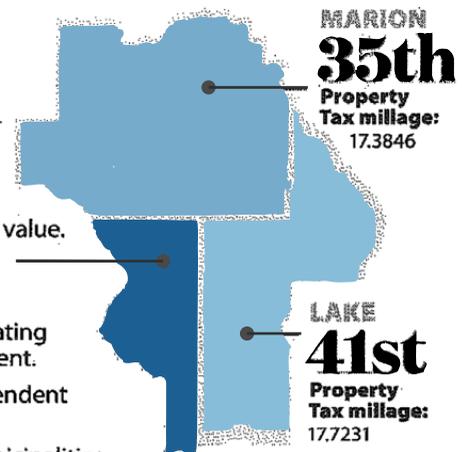
One mill represents \$1 per every \$1,000 of assessed property value.

5.867 mills go to the school board.

5.7 mills go for operating the county government.

.35 mills go to independent special districts.

.3447 mills go to municipalities.



Source: Florida Department of Revenue

TAXES C10, Continued

All things being equal, don't expect the commission to increase property taxes this year either, Commissioner Doug Gilpin said. "I would say unless something extraordinary happens, we're on the way to another year of rolling back the tax rate," he said.

The commission is able to do this for one reason, Gilpin said, "It's consistency," he said. "We've had a consistent path of doing what government is supposed to do. What we've done is concentrated on fire and safety, knowing you have to have a safe community to have a thriving community. Then we've really let the free market system work like America intended it to work, and the results have been outstanding."

The commission's adoption of fiscally conservative policies also has contributed, Giblin said. "It's because we've had the philosophy that we do what we can pay for," he said. "We don't put citizens into debt. We're belled with a growing population. With that brings revenue. So the wise use of tax dollars is what's giving us this string of no tax increases."

For the past 11 years, the commission has set the property tax rate at or below the rollback rate. The rollback rate is the millage rate at which the county would raise the same amount of tax revenue it had the prior year.

"The Board of County Commissioners takes a lot of pride in continuing to provide an efficient and effective level of service at the lowest possible tax rate," Sumter County Administrator Bradley Arnold said.

Two reasons explain why the commission has been able to maintain the low rate, he said. First of all, The Villages continues to grow, Arnold said. "The Villages is the economic engine that's driving that," he said.

Second, they've been able to demonstrate that the size of the organization doesn't have to be huge, he said. The total number of county employees is only 206. "We've been able to make service partnerships with public and private companies," Arnold said. While Sumter was able to maintain its placement on the list, the surrounding counties did not. Marion County had the 21st-lowest tax rate in 2014; and dropped to No. 35 in 2015, of Likewise, Lake County was No. 24 in the state in 2014 but No. 41 in 2015. One strong indicator of Sumter's low tax rate is the state's total tax burden. And sometimes, it's good to be at the bottom of the list.

Florida is ranked 44th out of the 50 states for overall tax burden of 7.22 percent, according a recent study by WalletHub.

The research group measured property taxes, individual income taxes, and sales and gross receipts taxes - the three components of state tax burden - as percentages of the total personal income in each state. Most of that low tax rate is attributed to the fact that the state has no individual income tax. However, the state ranked No. 24 for property tax burden at 2.94 percent; and No. 11 for total sales and gross receipts tax burden at 4.28 percent, according to the WalletHub's analysis.

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