

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Ending property taxes would devastate Ohio communities



Another viewpoint is a column The News-Herald makes available so all sides of an issue may be aired. Andy Rose is Administrator for Concord Township.

I am writing to express my firm and unequivocal opposition to any proposal that seeks to eliminate property taxes in the state of Ohio.

While the motivation behind such efforts may stem from a sincere desire to ease the financial burdens many families face, particularly during periods of economic instability, the complete eradication of property taxes would be both shortsighted and profoundly damaging.

The consequences of such a move would be far-reaching, stripping communities of essential services, crippling local governments, and shifting the financial burden to those least able to bear it.

Let us be clear: Property taxes are not just another government revenue stream; they are the very lifeblood of local governance.

In cities, villages, and townships, property taxes fund critical services that form the bedrock of our daily lives. This includes our police departments, fire services, emergency medical responders, road repair crews, sanitation services, libraries and public parks.

These are not luxury services; they are fundamental to our safety, education, well-being, and quality of life.

If Ohio were to eliminate property taxes, the results would be catastrophic.

Unlike cities, Ohio's townships are particularly vulnerable. Under current law, townships are prohibited from collecting income or sales taxes.

Property taxes are, therefore, their only substantial source of revenue.

Stripping this away would leave townships with no legal or practical means to fund even the most basic services. This is not just an inconvenience, it is a direct threat to the functionality and stability of local governments.

Consider what this means in practical terms: Fewer police officers and firefighters, slower emergency response times, deteriorating roads, and reduced or eliminated services for seniors, veterans, and families in need.

Public employees could face mass layoffs, and townships would find themselves at the mercy of unpredictable state funding, which is often inconsistent, politically influenced, and far from guaranteed.

Some proponents of eliminating property taxes argue that the lost revenue could be offset by increased sales or income taxes.

This notion is not only unrealistic but also unjust.

Sales and income taxes are far more volatile and regressive. Unlike property taxes, which are based on the assessed value of tangible assets, sales taxes hit hardest those with the lowest incomes; individuals and families who must spend a larger percentage of their earnings on basic necessities.

Income taxes, too, fluctuate with the economy and can disproportionately impact working-class families, particularly those living paycheck to paycheck.

In contrast, property taxes offer a relatively stable and predictable revenue stream. They allow local governments to budget more effectively and provide reliable services year-round. Eliminating them would inject financial uncertainty into every aspect of local government.

The very idea of replacing property tax revenue with sales or income taxes also ignores the constitutional and logistical challenges involved in overhauling Ohio's tax structure — an effort that would likely take years to implement and refine.

Rather than pursue a path that would cause irreversible harm, Ohioans should focus their energy on modernizing the current property tax system.

Yes, there are legitimate concerns about how property is assessed, how taxes are levied, and how fair the process is for all residents. These concerns deserve attention and reform. But reform should not mean elimination.

Some thoughtful reforms might include implementing more transparent assessment procedures, placing reasonable caps on tax increases to protect long-term homeowners, and exploring targeted relief for low-income seniors and working families.

We can and should make the property tax system fairer and accountable.

But that work must happen within the framework of preserving this essential funding source not dismantling it entirely.

Additionally, we must consider the broader impact of property tax elimination on Ohio's economic reputation. Communities with strong public services are more likely to attract businesses and new residents.

Eliminating property taxes would undercut the very foundation of what makes a community livable, investable, and desirable.

The long-term economic cost of such a decision could far outweigh any short-term relief provided to property owners.

I understand the frustration many residents feel when looking at their property tax bills. No one enjoys paying taxes. But we must recognize what those taxes support.

Every dollar funds services that are often taken for granted—until they are gone. We must also consider who benefits most from such a drastic change.

Large commercial property owners and wealthy individuals with substantial real estate holdings stand to gain the most, while ordinary Ohioans are left to bear the brunt of reduced services and increased alternative taxes.

In closing, I urge my fellow Ohioans to consider not just the immediate appeal of a lower tax bill, but the long-term damage that would result from eliminating property taxes.

Let us not jeopardize the integrity of our communities or the safety of our neighborhoods in pursuit of a misguided policy.

Reject any petition or proposal that seeks to eliminate property taxes in Ohio.

Stand with our local governments, our first responders, and our families by defending this vital source of public funding.