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## **Texas Freedom Caucus to Local Governments: 2020 Property Tax Rates Must Be Significantly Lowered—Jurisdictions Must Reduce Spending, Focus on Essential Services**

AUSTIN— As property valuations are being challenged, members of the Texas Freedom Caucus call on all local governments to significantly lower 2020 tax rates. “Millions of Texans are out of work due to government-ordered shutdowns and families across our state are struggling to pay their bills. Now is the time property taxing entities can help people by cutting their property tax rates to let them keep more of their own money in their pocket to recover,” said Rep. Mayes Middleton, chair of the caucus. “We are urging all taxing entities to significantly reduce their property tax rates in 2020. It is appalling that some jurisdictions are using this pandemic as an excuse to attempt tax hikes and disregard the property tax limits passed last year in Senate Bill 2. It is fundamentally wrong to raise taxes at this time. Instead, we should be talking about substantially lowering tax rates to save taxpayers the money they’ll rely on during their time of greatest need. This isn’t something Texans just want—it’s something they need right now.”

“Property taxes cannot be allowed to rise as family incomes fall,” said Rep. Matt Schaefer, vice-chair of the caucus and a member of the House Appropriations Committee. “Families are cutting their expenses, so cities and counties should be talking about how much they’re going to cut taxes to stay in line with the burden on families. With the economic consequences of the virus growing every day and over 2,000,000 Texans claiming unemployment, we can no longer accept a perpetual rise in property taxes. Even before this crisis, property taxes were rising faster than people’s incomes. Every dollar of taxes must be judged in light of our highest priorities. We launched the Texas Accountability Project to make sure that happens at the state level, and cities and counties must do the same.”

“This is not a partisan issue—taxpayers simply cannot afford to pay the same amount of taxes as last year. Property valuations are dramatically up, so rates must dramatically fall,” said Rep. Middleton. “At a minimum, we’re calling on all taxing entities to cut tax rates below the ‘no-new-revenue’ rate (which takes into account valuation increases and proportionately reduces rates) prescribed by last session’s Senate Bill 2. At the end of the day, taxing entities must not only cut tax rates to nullify valuation increases, but also cut rates to match the decline in local economies. Texans need a tax break this year, and you don’t owe a penny in taxes until the rate is adopted, so we encourage all Texans to make their voice heard loud and clear to property taxing entities.”

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