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GUEST COLUMN:
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House Bill 126 Needed to Stop Unnecessary Costs to Property Owners

If you are a homeowner or a business owner, there's a good chance buying that property is one of your favorite memories. Whether it was your first home or the location of your auto body shop or insurance business, the thrill and excitement of owning your property and the optimism you had to create new memories or build a thriving business is something you may have waited years to experience and look forward to in the years ahead.

Now imagine that months, if not years later, you receive a notice from your county auditor that your property taxes are going up. Way up. To make matters worse, you find out your increases are for years where you didn't even own your property. How would something like this happen? Because your local school district, perhaps the same one where your kids attend or the one where you vote for the levies on the ballot, is using your tax dollars to challenge your property value to force you to pay even more in taxes.

What we just described isn't a hypothetical situation; it's a very real and common occurrence throughout Ohio. We believe this is something that future homeowners and job creators shouldn't experience.

Despite the vitriol and misleading claims from editors and reporters in Ohio's media, legislation recently passed by the Senate will actually curb abuses by local governments. House Bill 126 will reclaim the tax appeals process for the people for whom it should be available: taxpayers.

After receiving over $6 billion in federal funding that includes little oversight, school districts are

fighting tooth and nail for the ability to continue to abuse options in current law to extract even more tax dollars from real property owners. Their aggressive tactics scare away investment in Ohio, and can cause homeowners to pay taxes on homes they did not even own, and add unnecessary cost to property ownership. It really is as simple as that.

The current system creates “dark money” collected by districts that is tucked into district budget line items, out of sight from the school funding system and makes districts appear as if they’re collecting less in tax revenues than what they really collect so they can get more state funding. This extra money is coming out of the pockets of homeowners and businesses, and that’s less money going into growing Ohio’s economy. What’s worse, is that this practice also takes funding away from other taxing authorities like ADAMH, senior services and libraries that don’t engage in this abusive practice. House Bill 126 fixes this by emphasizing the rights of taxpayers.

Ohio needs to ratchet back the aggressiveness of school districts. School districts ought to stay in their lane and get back to educating children. Ohio is the only state in the country that permits these aggressive tactics by school districts after valuation is set by a county auditor. We should not tolerate, or allow, local government officials to challenge the decisions of fellow local government officials to squeeze additional government funding at the expense of hardworking and retired Ohioans.

We encourage the Ohio House to concur with the Senate’s changes to HB 126, protect our state’s taxpayers, and move Ohio into the mainstream of property tax administration.

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