

Rising property taxes become ‘top economic issue’ in Ohio governor’s race

By Anna Staver
Cleveland.com

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Republican Vivek Ramaswamy recently told Portage county voters that ending “the game-playing with the 20-mill floor” would be a top priority for him if elected governor.

That offhand reference to an [obscure but important tax rule](#) for public schools signals just how much property taxes increases have become a focal point for Ohio voters -- and for the 2026 governor’s race.

“It’s what I believe is the top economic issue facing so many Ohioans in our state,” Ramaswamy said in his video address. “The top economic burden for so many Ohioans in our state.”

But while the frustration from homeowners is clear, solutions are far less straightforward. Ohio’s property tax system is a tangled web of local levies and state-imposed limits.

“The larger discussion is we should scrap the entire property tax system in Ohio and start over,” Attorney General Dave Yost said.

Yost, who is running against Ramaswamy in the 2026 Republican gubernatorial primary, argues real reform requires experience — not just bold promises.

“This is a guy who at his announcement said let’s get rid of the property tax and income tax,” Yost said. “He’s walking it back now because he’s realized what those numbers actually are.”

About 55% of Ohio’s local and state revenue comes from those two types of taxes, according to the nonpartisan [Legislative Services Commission](#). Eliminating them would require a massive cut to public services.

Yost supports moving Ohio toward a flat tax -- and even no income taxes -- but said that’s “not something we can do in a year.”

Before serving in statewide office, Yost was a county auditor, where his job included calculating property taxes and fielding homeowner questions. That background, he says, gives him the expertise to change the tax system in a way that avoids unintended consequences.

In the short term, the two Republicans are mostly on the same page.

They think people don't understand millage (mills) and support requiring levies to be calculated in dollars.

Mills represent \$1 for every \$1,000 of assessed value on a house. And assessed value is 35% of your appraised value.

If your home appraised for \$200,000, your assessed value would be \$70,000. One mill would then represent \$70.

So that [8.6 mill levy](#) Cleveland voters approved for public schools in November would cost this hypothetical homeowner \$602.

"One of the things you could do in this day and age is send out an estimate to homeowners and require that as part of the levy," Yost said.

It's much easier, in his opinion, to decide whether you can afford \$602 instead of 8.6 mills.

Ramaswamy said in his video address that he would put "a ceiling on how much of a property tax you can pay as a percentage of the land or property your own."

A Ramaswamy spokesperson said he would have more information about his property tax proposals in the coming months.

Yost wants to stop all property tax increases for people age 70 or older, providing they earn less than a certain amount each year.

And both think an inflation-reducing law from the 1970s that prohibited levies from collecting more money than voters approved should apply to all levies. That would effectively [eliminate that 20-mill floor](#), a set of mills for public schools that cannot be reduced even if it means levies collect more.

"When you pay as much in your property taxes as you do on the principal of your mortgage, that's unjust," Ramaswamy said. "It's unamerican."

Cleveland.com reached out to Heather Hill, [an entrepreneur who also is running in the GOP primary for governor.](#)

Republicans aren't alone in pushing for property tax reform. The issue is bipartisan. Democrats in the state House and Senate have said it's one of the top issues voters call to complain about.

"Rising property values are forcing seniors out of their homes," Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio, a Lakewood Democrat, said after the governor's state of the state.

Where Antonio and Democratic gubernatorial candidate Amy Acton split from Republicans is on the solution.

"The reason our property taxes are going up is because the legislature keeps giving our money to special interests while they defund local schools and services such as police and fire...," Acton said in a statement. "Needed property tax relief for Ohio families begins with a statehouse that that stops wasting our money on giveaways to the super wealthy and doesn't force local taxpayers to shoulder the burden."