



May 29, 2026

Florida Senators and Representatives  
Florida State Capitol  
400 S. Monroe St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

Dear Senator or Representative,

I am writing regarding Special Session F which has been called regarding a property tax ballot initiative. This issue has been percolating for a long time, and it is unlikely that I have information to share that you have not heard multiple times before. However, I feel compelled to write on behalf of the members of the Suncoast League of Cities who desire to make their own choices about the levels of services based on what their constituents want and are willing to pay for.

Ad valorem revenue increases for many of our cities are in line with state averages, and I agree they have increased significantly since 2020. We too are concerned about this economic trend. However, we push back on the assumption that these increases reflect waste, incompetence or fraud on the part of our member cities. When core expenses such as wages and benefits, public safety operating expenses, stormwater management and other critical infrastructure are overlaid on the same graph they all show increases at the same or similar rates that revenue increased for the same period. Some expenses, such as insurance, increased at an even steeper slope. A singular example of this is street repaving, which has more than doubled in cost since 2020, thus requiring twice the previous budget just to maintain the same repaving schedule.

Creating carve-outs for public safety expenditures aims to provide the public with an assurance that police and fire services will not be diminished, however, this is misleading. Police and fire departments are often unionized, so annual step increases and other raises are usually contractually obligated. To meet these obligations, and to successfully negotiate future bargaining agreements, cities will obviously need to shift funds from other departments and projects. Often, current total ad valorem income does not even cover public safety budgets, much less other services. This is true both for cities who have their own departments and those who contract services with other entities.

Many services provided by our member cities go beyond "core services" because the residents of our cities *want* them. The priorities of our cities obviously vary, but our residents *want* parks and amenities, they *want* sidewalks in good repair and streets without potholes, and most of all they *want* the freedom to decide these things for themselves through their elected Councilmembers/Commissioners. Local amenities that exceed core services should not necessarily be assumed to reflect waste or fraud, in many cases they stem from the desires of the residents themselves via their local representatives.

It is worth noting that the voters of our cities elected us the same way they elected their State Legislators and have far more access to us than they do Legislators. The elected officials of our cities are acutely aware of the wishes of their constituents and very directly feel the consequences of these decisions, even before elections.

Many of our members have also wondered if there are alternate methods for funding local government that do not permanently encumber people's homes or are more equitable. But simply cutting off the funding for local government with no realistic plan for replacement revenue is not a responsible strategy. The residents of our cities will certainly welcome property tax elimination until many of the services they expect are reduced or eliminated and they realize it is no longer in their power to restore them via their City Council/Commission. By then, however, the situation will be virtually irreversible.

I respectfully request that you vote against this measure and continue to search for more viable alternatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andy Ross', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andy Ross, President  
Mayor, City of Temple Terrace

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The Suncoast League of Cities (SLC) consists of 27 member municipalities in Hillsborough, Pasco and Pinellas counties. We work closely with and are supported by the Florida League of Cities (FLC) in representing member interests to the Florida Legislature, Governor's office and state agencies.