

Legislator calls for hearing on property tax cap

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RENO (AP) - State Sen. Randolph Townsend, R-Reno, is pressing legislative money committees to begin hearings after the Nov. 2 election on a plan to cap property taxes.

"We need to get the public involved in this," said Townsend, chairman of the Nevada - Legislative Commission.

Because of the potential impact to local governments, he said, he would like a number of options analyzed to slow the growth in property taxes.

Homeowner complaints over soaring property taxes have prompted many Nevada lawmakers to call for a tax cap to avoid a citizens' initiative like California's Proposition 13.

A booming real estate market in Clark and Washoe counties is fueling the higher taxes. Land values for more than 100,000 properties in Washoe could climb from 5 to 26 percent next year.

Gov. Kenny Guinn earlier rejected a call for a special session to deal with the issue, saying it can be addressed at the beginning of the 2005 legislative session.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Raggio, R-Reno, said he has asked the Legislative Counsel Bureau to provide an analysis of various tax caps.

Assemblyman Bernie Anderson, D-Sparks, said a tax cap of some sort is inevitable. Some legislators are calling for a 6 percent cap on annual property tax increases.

"It's the right thing to do," Anderson told the *Reno Gazette-Journal*. "The property tax holder is going to have some relief."

Assemblywoman Sheila Leslie, D-Reno, agreed: "Home values are skyrocketing. We have to make sure we are not taxing people out of their homes."

Clark County Assessor Mark Schofield, who first proposed the 6 percent cap, said all property owners in his county would face big boosts in their tax bills next July without it.

"We know the public in Clark County and Washoe County" will not tolerate this level of property tax increases," Schofield said. "If we don't do something now, it will be done for us. We will end up like California and have a government-by-initiative petition."

Assemblywoman Sharron Angle, R-Reno, failed in a bid to qualify her petition to limit property tax increases for the Nov. 2 ballot.

Angle will try at the 2005 Legislature to put her plan into law - and then to put it on the ballot in 2006.

She said it is important that voters place property tax increase limits in the state constitution where they cannot be changed without a vote of the people.

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