

Viewpoints

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Flathead Beacon

LETTERS July 31, 2019

Montana's Ridiculous Property Taxes

As one of the many who came to Northwest Montana to retire and live in this beautiful state, columnist Tammi Fisher is way off base when it comes to the tax situation. I came here 10 years ago from Arizona (but did make most of my money in California). I built my dream house on Flathead Lake and am now fighting the ridiculous property tax situation here like just about everyone else it seems. I went to personally file my appeal, which they seem to expect as it is the front page of your new appraisal rate, and there was a line out the door. That says it all for me.

The Montana revenue system is outdated and just flat out unfair. Because there is no sales tax here (great, and yet part of the problem), property owners, especially those who have built high-end homes here, are paying higher taxes than many states Fisher cites, including California. They have been raised annually for the last 10 years, and with additional school bonds and other "needs" that are not covered in the basic mill rate, they are off the charts high. I am literally being taxed right off the lake and probably will have to sell my dream home. Even the county appraiser agrees that the mill rate is too high. Property values may be rising in Missoula and other places, but here in the Flathead they are slow and stagnant. Montana needs to fully overhaul the tax structure and if that involves a sales tax, higher income tax, a summer tourist tax or legalizing marijuana, so be it. It has to change.

I greatly improved our neighborhood by building a beautiful home in place of an old house and now I am going to have to pay a much higher property tax than my last home in Arizona. My local realtor summed it up by saying "20 percent of higher priced homes pay for 80 percent of everyone else who is not interested in working." Bad plan.

She is right about one thing: The weather here is what will insure that Montana never gets too populated.

*Justin Fontaine
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