

TAX MATTERS

JANUARY 8, 2009, Issue #09-01, by Bernard Ridens, Executive Director
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1. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ATTEND
2. PROPERTY TAX CAPS?
3. ISTEP TESTING
4. TWELVE DAYS OF CONGRESS
5. PUBLIC MEETINGS

REVIEW OF PAST TAX MATTERS

DECEMBER 18, 2008 (#08-50)

- LINE ITEM, 2009 VIGO COUNTY BUDGET
 - http://www.vigocounty.org/egov/docs/1228855013_206756.pdf
- VIGO COUNTY AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS

DECEMBER 11, 2008 (#08-49)

- 2009 DUES – EXCELLENT RESPONSE, THANK YOU

DECEMBER 4, 2008 (#08-48)

- SURVEYS AND DUES
 - If you will be paying after January 31, 2009, please let us know so that we may develop the 2009 budget accordingly.
- WHAT COSTS MORE PER YEAR THAN THE IRAQ WAR?

NOVEMBER 20, 2008 (#08-47)

- FLOOD ROAD REPAIR
 - Though not all the money promised by FEMA has been received, most of the repair projects have been completed. We commend the highway department for doing an excellent job in a short period of time.
- 2008 ANNUAL REPORTS/SURVEY
 - By now, you should have received a copy of the Taxpayers Association Annual Report. You should also find a survey accompanying this report. Please complete the survey at your convenience and return it using the pre-addressed envelope provided.
- TA ANNUAL MEETING DATE CORRECTION
 - The Taxpayers Association Annual Meeting will be held *Tuesday, April 28, 2009* instead of May 18 as was previously announced

The Taxpayers Association is a not-for-profit organization supported by membership dues. Any citizen or group of citizens in Vigo County may be a member. Current members are encouraged to promote membership in the organization by giving the attached application to a potential member. [See the TA application and dues structure.](#) This is NOT an invoice for your dues.

1. WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO ATTEND

We encourage you to attend the Vigo County School Corporation Community Forum to be held **tonight** at South Vigo High School. Those attending and participating interactively with electronic clickers will have a major impact on decisions made by the Community Task Force concerning future Vigo County School Corporation facilities.

VCSC Community Forum Results for December 8 –
<http://www.schmidt-arch.com/owners/VigoCounty.html>

We encourage you to attend the Vigo County Public Library Hearings regarding the proposed budget shortfalls for calendar year 2009. The hearings will be Wednesday, January 21st, 6:30 to 8:30 PM and Thursday, January 22nd, 9:30 to 11:30 AM in the lower level meeting room complex of the Main Branch of the library. Nancy Dowell, VCPL director, will conduct a presentation at the beginning of each session and answer questions regarding the shortfall. The public is invited to provide input by commenting or submitting comments and concerns in writing. The written comments will be submitted to the VCPL board for consideration.

We encourage you to attend the Legislative Crackerbarrel sessions – meet and talk with your area legislators.

Saturday, January 10, 10:00 AM, Vigo County Main Library Lower Level

We need to make our lawmakers aware of our thoughts. The Crackerbarrel sessions are a tremendous way of getting this done. The members of the TA are very knowledgeable and are obviously interested in the manner in which taxes are levied and spent. It would be very beneficial to our community and state if many of you would attend at least one of the remaining sessions listed below. If you are unable to attend, please send someone in your place. When our representatives return to Indianapolis, it would be beneficial if they could state that the Crackerbarrels held in Terre Haute were attended by many area citizens concerned about items under consideration by the 2009 assembly.

Subsequent Crackerbarrel sessions:
(10:00 am at the Main Branch of the Vigo County Public Library
Lower level - rooms A, B, and C.)
February 14
March 14
April 11

2. PROPERTY TAX CAPS?

The 2009 Assembly will be considering the governor's proposed property tax caps. Serious questions must be answered before the issue is placed on the 2010 General Election ballot as a public question. The cap concept could be a good thing, provided it is thoroughly studied and doesn't have a score of loopholes. The proposed idea is to limit homestead taxes to one percent of the fair market appraised value, rental property to two percent of the fair market

appraised value and business property to three percent of fair market appraised value. This system classifies property, which is said to be unconstitutional in the state of Indiana, and thus the reason is may be a question of the 2010 ballot.

Since the majority of voters are homeowners (as opposed to business and industry owners), the question must be clearly defined. If not, the results are easy to predict. The electorate will vote to have apartment owners and businesses pay the greater percentages of taxes.

Here are a few of many questions to consider:

1. Must the percentages be one, two or three percent, respectively? What about 1.5, 2, 2.5, etc?
2. If classifying property becomes legal, how long will it be before more classifications are proposed? For example, will we have retail business capped differently from construction warehousing or manufacturing, for example?
3. A person only qualifies for one homestead. If this person provides a home for others to live in (such as their children or elderly parents), is it fair that this house be taxed at the 2% rate?
4. Is the proposed spread of one, two and three percent fair? Are government-provided services equally fair?
5. In the future, how many new taxes will be sought to make up for lost revenue due to fixed cap rates?

3. ISTEP TESTING

One of the greatest wastes to tax dollars ever contrived are currently being spent to test our children's learned skills. Now, please don't misunderstand me on this topic. Accountability of the educational system is of great importance and can be done. However, the methods currently used are not the best. One size does not fit all and never will. The annual results continue to be predictable and show minimal change from year to year. For illustrative purposes, you can review the actual Indiana tenth-grade mathematics graduation qualifying exam:

http://www.doe.in.gov/istep/docs/AppliedSkills/2008-Fall/04498_AS-MATH-Released_v03.pdf

It is my opinion that this 2008 exam is easier than previous years, and scores remain about the same. After many years of testing, it is very clear that at least 25 percent of Indiana's tenth graders do not have the cognitive ability to pass this level of mathematics, and thus they are the students not acquiring a diploma as expected. The dollars spent on this false goal are so outlandish that no responsible person or entity has been able to provide me a good documented answer.

Testing/accountability should be geared toward "end of course" exams where certain courses are required for specific career tracks such as college preparation.

Here is a table summary of the percentage of correct answers for the tenth-grade math test (79,565 students):

Question	0 points	1 point	2 points	3 points
<i>Test 1</i>				
Q1	33%	42%	23%	
Q2	65%	15%	14%	
Q3	44%	35%	18%	
Q4	33%	39%	12%	13%
Q5	41%	6%	49%	
Q6	63%	7%	27%	
Q7	37%	27%	31%	
Q8	65%	10%	21%	
<i>Test 2</i>				
Q1	68%	8%	17%	
Q2	43%	7%	47%	
Q3	57%	11%	19%	
Q4	43%	24%	28%	
Q5	48%	10%	18%	20%
Q6	47%	33%	18%	
Q7	15%	40%	42%	
Q8	57%	3%	32%	

4. TWELVE DAYS OF CONGRESS

Though the holidays have already passed us, the events that happened in Congress in the past year are still very relevant. Here, set to the tune of a well-known seasonal song, is the “Twelve Days of Congress.”

- 12 [thousand earmarks,](#)
- 11th [hour spending,](#)
- 10 [trillion debt,](#)
- 9 [stalled spending bills,](#)
- 8 [percent approval,](#)
- 7 [hundred billion bailout,](#)
- 6 [percent unemployment,](#)
- 5 [grand pay raise,](#)
- 4 [pricey raptors,](#)
- 3 [auto bailouts,](#)
- 2 [feuding parties,](#)

And deficits [as far as we can see...](#)

Source: Taxpayers for Common Sense

5. PUBLIC MEETINGS

The purpose of this calendar is to encourage taxpayers to attend public meetings. Taxpaying persons working at your business or living in your neighborhood should be encouraged to attend a meeting of their choice at least once per year. The date and time for the meetings listed below are always subject to change. Organizations that are underlined have a web page that can be accessed by clicking on their respective hyperlinks. The contact person is also listed. You should call the appropriate office and confirm the date and time if you plan to attend.

Date	Time	Public Meeting	Location	Contact Info
Thur. Jan. 8	6:00 pm	<u>VCSC COMMUNITY FORUM</u>	TH South Vigo H.S.	Judy 462-4216
Thur. Jan. 8	6:30 pm	<u>City Council – Reorganization</u>	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle 232-3375
Thur. Jan. 8	7:00 pm	<u>City Council – Sunshine Meeting</u>	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle 232-3375
Sat. Jan. 10	10:00 am	LEGISLATIVE CRACKERBARREL	Library – Main Branch	Nancy 232-1113
Mon. Jan. 12	2:00 pm	<u>Board of Public Works and Safety</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Robin 232-4767
Mon. Jan. 12	6:00 pm	West Terre Haute Town Board	500 W. Nat'l, WTH	Melody 533-2034
Mon. Jan. 12	7:00 pm	<u>Vigo County School Board</u>	VCSC Board Room	Judy 462-4216
Tue. Jan. 13	9:00 am	<u>County Commissioners</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Tue. Jan. 13	4:15 pm	<u>Vigo County Redevelopment Commission</u>	County Annex	Amanda 234-2524
Tue. Jan. 13	7:00 pm	Seelyville Town Board	Seelyville Water Office	Tamara 877-2665
Wed. Jan. 14	10:00 am	<u>County Board of Zoning Appeals</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Wed. Jan. 14	2:00 pm	<u>E-911 Advisory Board</u>	County Jail – Sheriff's Training Room	Greg 462-3226 ext. 320
Wed. Jan. 14	5:00 pm	<u>Vigo County Board of Health</u>	County Annex	Louise 462-3428
Wed. Jan. 14	7:00 pm	<u>Airport Authority</u>	Airport	Kara 877-2524
Thur. Jan. 15	1:30 pm	Tree Advisory Board	City Hall Mayor's Conf. Room	Jennifer 232-4028
Thur. Jan. 15	7:00 pm	<u>City Council – Regular Meeting</u>	City Hall – Courtroom	Michelle 232-3375
Fri. Jan. 16	1:30 pm	Honey Creek Conservancy District	3241 S. 3 rd Place	Craig 232-4311
Mon. Jan. 19	5:30 pm	<u>Human Relations Commission</u>	Booker T. Washington Center	Jeff 232-0110
Mon. Jan. 19	7:00 pm	<u>Vigo County Public Library</u>	Library – Main Branch	Nancy 232-1113
Tue. Jan. 20	9:00 am	<u>County Commissioners</u>	County Annex	Judy 462-3367
Tue. Jan. 20	10:00 am	City Board of Sanitary Commissioners	City Hall – 3 rd Floor	Sally 235-5458
Wed. Jan. 21	9:30 am	Clay-Owen-Vigo Solid Waste District	109 E. Nat'l, Brazil IN	Janet 800-387-3380
Wed. Jan. 21	4:00 pm	<u>City Redevelopment Commission</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Phenny 232-0018
Wed. Jan. 21	4:30 pm	<u>City Park Board – General Meeting</u>	Deming Park	Eddie 232-2727
Fri. Jan. 23	5:30 pm	<u>Information Technology Advisory Board</u>	City Hall – 1 st Floor	Brad 244-2316

END

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