

# Group submits petitions to lower county property tax levy

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**EDWARDSVILLE** - - Petitions were filed today by a grassroots group led by **Madison County Treasurer Kurt Prenzler, CPA**, and **Edwardsville Veterinarian Dr. Mike Firsching** that will give voters the chance to decide to lower the Madison County property taxes by about \$2 million.

Prenzler and Firsching submitted the petitions today to the county clerk's office and was joined by a group of concerned citizens and local officials.

About 10,000 signatures were collected throughout the county by over 100 collectors. By law that will force **County Clerk Debra Ming Mendoza**, to place the issue on the November ballot. Only 8030 signatures were required according to lawyers consulted by the group.

According to county records, Madison County collected \$385 million in property taxes last year from all taxing entities in the county. This year the county will collect an estimated \$405 million from those same entities according to Prenzler's preliminary estimates.

"Property taxes in Madison County are exploding," said Madison County Treasurer, Kurt Prenzler. "Troy will see property taxes rise roughly 13% from last year. The property tax burden on working families, small businesses and seniors is hurting Madison County".

Troy is not alone in the dramatic tax increases. Cathy Goclan, a Republican County Board candidate from Granite City who collected more than 100 signatures for the petition drive, said "Property taxes are soaring out of control. According to estimates it looks like taxes in Granite City may increase nearly 10% from last year. When was the last time any of us got a 10% salary increase?"

Wood River Township Supervisor Mike Babcock says that he knows first hand that "Every taxing body must do their part to address the property tax crisis we have in Illinois. Property tax levies can be cut in a responsible manner without jeopardizing vital services. In Wood River Township we have cut the levy, budget and tax rate without layoffs and without reducing services."

The argument that law enforcement services will have to be curtailed if the levy decrease is passed by county voters simply doesn't seem to add up according to Prenzler. "The mathematical facts are that the county has \$25 million in cash reserves, \$9 million in the Capital Projects Fund, and each year the county has run a surplus of \$3-4 million dollars after all the county's bills are paid. It is unfair for the County Chairman to be touting a small levy decrease of \$800,000, his first

decrease in over 14 years, when in the same year he raised county fees by \$600,000."

"Dunstan only made this modest tax decrease after I had publicly called for a \$3.4 million tax decrease," Prenzler emphasized.

According to Babcock, "Illinois now has the highest property tax burden in the nation. We have to stand up and do something about it or people will be taxed out of their homes."

