

Jupiter Courier

Editorial: Taxpayers could vote with their feet — and leave

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Floridians, and in particular Palm Beach County residents, are getting hit with what could be called the "Perfect Storm," a triple whammy of stagnant, but high home prices, exponentially rising insurance rates and higher property taxes.

All of this bad news mixed together could create a taxpayer revolt that would make the Boston Tea Party look like a couple of teenagers having a little fun.

Part of the problem is high real estate taxes, particularly for newer homeowners, and rising insurance costs that have forced some homeowners to drop coverage.

The other part of the problem, based on comments Tuesday from those who own non-residential and marina properties, is a 300 percent tax increase compared to 5 to 7 percent elsewhere in Florida. Palm Beach County Property Appraiser Gary Nikolits told county commissioners that often marinas are appraised at the "highest and best use," and in many cases that means condos along the county's precious waterfronts.

What about condos?

Drive down to Fort Lauderdale and look at Galt Ocean Mile if you'd like to see what happens when someone thinks the highest and best use for waterfront is condos.

It's a veritable canyon of condos.

As far as most residents are concerned, they'd rather see boats bobbing in their slips or a Riverwalk or a park than more condos and lost access to waterfront.

State legislators need to put politics aside and get insurance rates down, allow for homestead exemption portability to newly purchased homes, and both the state and county officials must look at how properties are assessed so that the commercial and marine industries can continue to flourish.

The alternative is a taxpayers revolt. And in this case the residents won't fight to live here as they did in the Revolutionary War, they'll vote with their feet and leave the county and the state.

It doesn't do any good to spend millions of our tax money to bring Scripps Institute into the county if our residents can't afford to live here and decide to move to South Carolina.