

## DeKalb Rep. Proposes Alternative Tax Plan

Legislation would give Georgians state income tax credits against state and county property taxes they pay.

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The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Published on: 11/15/07

A DeKalb County lawmaker is offering an alternative property tax break to the one being pushed by House Speaker Glenn Richardson.

**Rep. Kevin Levitas** (D-Atlanta), filed legislation today that would give Georgians state income tax credits against state and county property taxes they pay.

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Levitas also is proposing legislation that would freeze the value a home is assessed at for property taxes at the original purchase price.

So, if a homeowner bought a house for \$200,000, the assessed value would remain the same over the years no matter how much housing prices or the actual value of that home increased. That would mean the same tax bill every year unless city, county or school officials increased the millage rate.

Levitas said such a change would "create an equitable property tax system and force county governments to deal straightforwardly with taxpayers."

He said it would also protect long-term residents who might otherwise see their tax bills skyrocket as home values rise.

"My bill rewards those taxpayers who remain in their home counties for the long term, who have paid their fair share of the tax burden over the years and who want nothing more than to remain in their neighborhood."

Levitas' legislation isn't as sweeping as Richardson's proposal.

Richardson (R-Hiram), is calling for virtually all property taxes to be eliminated. He would make up the lost revenue by charging a sales tax on more goods and services. Richardson hinted Monday, however, that he may consider scaling his plan back to only eliminate school property taxes, which are the biggest portion of most homeowners' tax bill.

By contrast, Levitas' tax credits for state and county property taxes would affect a smaller portion of a homeowner's tax bill.

However, an assessment freeze is important long-term because the value of a house and property is used to determine the size of a tax bill. Even if the tax rate remains the same, a homeowner's tax bill goes up if the assessed value increases.

Levitas also filed legislation to give the DeKalb County Commissioners the power to set meeting agendas, run commission meetings and provide more oversight. Currently the county's CEO has enormous power to run the county.

Today is the first day lawmakers can file bills they plan to push during the 2008 legislative session. The session starts Jan. 14.