



Indian River County Local Government Coalition

March 29, 2026

The Honorable Ron DeSantis

Governor, State of Florida

The Capitol

400 S. Monroe Street

Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Members of the Florida Legislature

The Florida Senate

The Florida House of Representatives

The Capitol

400 S. Monroe Street

Tallahassee, Florida 32399

Sustaining Stable Local Funding for Community Services and State Priorities

Dear Governor DeSantis and Honorable Members of the Florida Legislature:

On behalf of the local government coalition of Indian River County, including the County and the municipalities that collectively serve our residents, businesses, and visitors, we write to share our concerns regarding proposals currently under discussion that would eliminate or significantly phase out property taxes as a funding source for local government. As the elected officials responsible for delivering services and implementing many state priorities and statutory responsibilities at the local level, we believe it is important to share the local perspective on how these proposals could affect the stability of the infrastructure, environmental initiatives, and community services that help carry out Florida's broader policy goals.

Property taxes serve as the financial foundation of local governance in Florida. They remain the primary source of revenue that enables counties, municipalities, school districts, and special districts to maintain essential public infrastructure and community services. These services include roadway maintenance, stormwater and drainage systems, parks and libraries, mosquito control, beach safety and lifeguard programs, emergency management coordination, environmental protection initiatives, and dependable water and utility systems.

In communities like ours, these services also directly support statewide priorities. Local governments play a critical role in protecting the Indian River Lagoon through stormwater and water quality projects that reduce nutrient runoff and support Florida's broader lagoon restoration efforts. At the same time, local emergency management teams coordinate hurricane preparedness, sheltering operations, and post-storm recovery efforts that support the State's overall disaster response framework.

Many of the priorities advanced by the State of Florida, including environmental restoration, hurricane resilience, infrastructure reliability, and community preparedness, are implemented at the local level. These efforts depend heavily on stable and predictable local funding. Significant disruption to that framework would not only affect local service delivery but could also impact on the effectiveness of state initiatives that rely on strong partnerships with local governments.

Property tax decisions are made locally through a transparent public process that include public hearings, elected representation, and direct accountability to the residents who live in our communities. This structure reflects a long-standing principle of Florida governance that local communities are best positioned to determine their own service levels and funding priorities.

While tax relief is an understandable and important goal, eliminating or dramatically reducing property taxes without a clearly defined and sustainable replacement would create significant fiscal uncertainty for communities across Florida. Florida's strong financial position has long been built on a balance of fiscal discipline, responsible local governance, and resilient infrastructure, all of which depend on stable and predictable funding at the community level.

Local governments must maintain roads, drainage systems, water infrastructure, environmental protection, and disaster readiness every day. Without a reliable replacement funding structure, the responsibility for these services would inevitably shift elsewhere through increased sales taxes, higher user fees, reduced service levels, or greater reliance on state appropriations. Equally important is the issue of local control. Eliminating the principal revenue authority of local governments would centralize fiscal decision making at the state level and reduce the ability of communities to respond to their own needs and priorities.

The local governments of Indian River County remain committed to responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. We recognize the financial pressures facing homeowners and businesses and welcome thoughtful discussions about tax reform, transparency, and fiscal accountability. However, any proposal to eliminate or dramatically reduce property taxes must address a fundamental question: How will Florida sustainably fund the essential services and infrastructure that support our communities and advance the priorities shared by both state and local government?

We respectfully urge the Governor and the Florida Legislature to carefully consider the long-term impacts of these proposals on local governments, infrastructure, environmental stewardship, disaster preparedness, and the stability of community services across our state.

Our coalition stands ready to work with you and legislative leaders to ensure any tax reform proposal provides meaningful relief for taxpayers while preserving the financial stability local governments need to deliver the services Floridians depend upon every day.

Thank you for your continued leadership and service to the people of Florida.

Respectfully,

Deryl Loar
**Chairman Indian River County
Board of County Commissioners**

John Cotugno
**Mayor
City of Vero Beach**

Jessica Salgado
**Mayor
City of Fellsmere**

Fred Jones
**Mayor
City of Sebastian**

Robert Gibbons
**Mayor
Town of Orchid Manager**