

Texas Senate
Select Committee on Property Tax
Reform and Relief



Senator Paul Bettencourt, Chair
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Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief Again Has Standing Room Only Turnout

Took testimony highlighting that as property taxes increase twice as fast as median income for lower income families, they become more dependent on government

Harlingen – For the second time in a row, the Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief had a standing room only turnout in Harlingen for its hearing on property taxes. Chair Paul Bettencourt (SD-7), committee members Senator's Eddie Lucio (SD-27), Brandon Creighton (SD-4), Van Taylor (SD-8), and Charles Perry (SD-28), as well as Senator Hinojosa (SD-20), who joined the panel for the day, heard invited, resource, and public testimony regarding property tax reform and relief and the appraisal process in Texas.

"Every taxing entity that came before the committee today agreed that when values go up and rates do not come down that is a tax increase," stated Senator Bettencourt. **"It is a breath of fresh air when we recognize the obvious that if values go up 7-10%, and your tax bill increases, that is in fact a tax increase."** This did not occur in the hearing in Bexar County, where officials argued whether these were tax increases or not.

Comptroller office data shows that statewide between 2005 and 2014, property taxes are rising 2.5 times faster than median household income. In Cameron County, city and county tax levies are both up 62% over this time period, while median household income has risen 30%. Data from Hidalgo County is under review due to discrepancies with reporting. The data continues to show that all over the state property tax growth continues to increase at an unsustainable pace.

During testimony, Senator Charles Perry (SD-28) highlighted that data provided by Cameron County showed that over a ten year period, that included the worst recession since the Great Depression, home values had either stagnated or increased. **"That is just not the way the economy works,"** said Senator Perry.

"Particularly noteworthy was testimony given by the Libre Initiative which highlighted the impact these rising tax bills have on potential homeownership in the Valley area," continued Senator Bettencourt. **"As property taxes consume more of household income, it hurts the ability of people to pursue the American dream of homeownership, especially in areas with a lower level of socioeconomic conditions."** As stated by Eric Garza, Texas Coalitions Director of the Libre Initiative, **"As taxes increase on lower income families, they become more dependent on government."**

Senator Van Taylor (SD-8) highlighted this issue, commenting, **"as government takes more, families keep less of their money."**

The committee heard invited testimony from Cameron County Chief Appraiser Frutosa Gomez, Jr, Cameron County Tax Assessor-Collector Tony Yzaguirre, Jr., Hidalgo County Chief Appraiser Rolando Garza, Hidalgo County Tax Assessor-Collector Pablo Villarreal, and Nueces County Judge Lloyd Neal.

The Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief will continue to hold hearings throughout Texas in the coming months. The next hearing will be held on March 21 in Lubbock, at Texas Tech University.

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Members

Brandon Creighton
Eddie Lucio, Jr.
Van Taylor

Kelly Hancock
Charles Perry
Carlos Uresti