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Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief Has Record Turnout at Hearing
Took invited, resource, and public testimony for six hours in San Antonio on rising tax bills

San Antonio – The Senate Select Committee on Property Tax Reform and Relief had a standing room only turnout, of up to 250, with 50 people testifying, for their hearing on property taxes in San Antonio. Chair Paul Bettencourt (SD-7), and other members, heard invited, resource, and public testimony for six hours on a wide range of issues regarding property tax relief and reform and the appraisal process in Texas.

Senator Lucio (SD-27) commented that, **"this was the biggest turnout I have seen for any hearing outside of the Capitol in my 29 years in office."**

"Comptroller office data presented at the hearing shows that statewide between 2005 and 2014, county tax levies were up 70%, city tax levies were up 61%, while median household income was only up 26%," said Chairman Bettencourt. **"That means that, statewide, taxes are rising 2.5 times faster than median family income. That is the problem that we are here to address."**

The committee heard invited testimony from Bexar County Tax Assessor-Collector Albert Uresti and Michael Amezcua, Chief Appraiser of the Bexar County Appraisal District. In his testimony Mr. Amezcua was questioned by Senator Hancock (SD-9) who examined the assertion that judicial commercial property value reductions mean homeowners pay more. As Senator Hancock noted, **"I just cannot get there from a mathematical standpoint."** Once values and the tax rate are set, a reduction on one would have no impact on the other.

During testimony from Bexar County Commissioner Tommy Calvert, the Tax Office, Commissioner and Chairman agreed that the County had received 30% more revenue in three years. **"But there was a respectful disagreement on whether that represented a tax increase,"** added Chairman Bettencourt.

Senator Van Taylor (SD-8) addressed this rate of growth and asked, **"how much government is enough?"**

"During testimony, by officials from the City of San Antonio, it was stated that their average home value was \$147,000," continued Chairman Bettencourt. **Given the 10.7% increase, testified to earlier, that means the average home would have paid \$80 more, except for a tax rate cut of 3/4th a penny. This 1.34% cut in the tax rate saved \$10 per household, so the net property tax increase per average San Antonio home was \$70, or a 9.2% increase, given the public testimony.**

The hearing was not without some humorous moments, such as when Chairman Bettencourt asked Mary Dennis, the Mayor of Live Oak, about the death and taxes axiom. Mayor Dennis works as a mortician, and Senator Bettencourt is an ex Tax Assessor-Collector. This hearing also marked the first time in history that the Texas Senate live streamed a committee hearing held outside of the Capitol.

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 February 11th in Harlingen, Texas.

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