



# Florida's Property Tax Amendment: Fact vs. Fiction — What Southwest Florida Homeowners Need to Know Before November

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If you own a home in North Port, Venice, Port Charlotte, Punta Gorda, Cape Coral, Fort Myers, or anywhere in Southwest Florida, there's one item on this November's ballot you'll want to understand completely: the property tax constitutional amendment passed by the Florida Legislature on June 2, 2026.

There's a lot of confusion out there — some of it because the proposal changed several times before its final version, and some of it because property taxes are genuinely complicated. As your local real estate team, our job isn't to tell you how to vote. It's to make sure you walk into that voting booth knowing exactly what's on the ballot. So let's separate fact from fiction.



## Fiction #1: "This eliminates property taxes in Florida."

**Fact:** The amendment does *not* eliminate property taxes. It dramatically expands the **homestead exemption** — the amount of your home's assessed value that is shielded from non-school property taxes.

Here's what it actually does:

- Raises Florida's current \$50,000 homestead exemption to **\$150,000 in 2027**
- Raises it again to **\$250,000 in 2028**
- Applies to **primary residences (homesteaded properties) only**

Full elimination of homestead property taxes has been discussed as a long-term goal in Tallahassee, but that is *not* what this amendment does. What you're voting on is an exemption increase.

## Fiction #2: "This will defund our public schools."

**Fact:** The expanded exemption **does not apply to school district property taxes**. School levies — which make up roughly 40% of the average Florida homeowner's property tax bill — were deliberately carved out of this amendment. If it passes, you will continue paying the school portion of your tax bill exactly as you do now.

This is probably the single most misunderstood point about the amendment, in both directions. Supporters sometimes overstate the savings ("my whole tax bill disappears!") and opponents sometimes overstate the impact ("our schools will be gutted!"). Neither is accurate. School funding is protected; the exemption applies to the non-school portion of your bill — the county, city, and special district levies.

### **Fiction #3: "Every property owner benefits equally."**

**Fact:** The big exemption increase applies only to **homesteaded primary residences**. If you own a second home, a seasonal property you haven't homesteaded, an investment property, or commercial real estate, the \$250,000 exemption does not apply to you.

That said, non-homestead property owners aren't entirely left out. The legislation also **lowers the cap on annual assessment increases for non-homesteaded properties**, which slows how quickly those tax bills can grow year over year. For our snowbird neighbors and investors, that's the part of the amendment that affects you.

### **Fiction #4: "If it gets more 'yes' votes than 'no' votes, it passes."**

**Fact:** Constitutional amendments in Florida require at least **60% voter approval** to pass — not a simple majority. An amendment can win 59% of the vote and still fail. This is why every informed vote matters so much, on either side.

### **Fiction #5: "There's no downside — it's free money for homeowners."**

**Fact:** This is where honesty matters, and we'd be doing you a disservice if we only told you half the story. Property taxes fund your local government services — sheriff's deputies, firefighters, road maintenance, stormwater systems, parks, and libraries.

A Florida House staff analysis estimated the amendment would reduce annual revenue to non-school local governments by roughly **\$4.6 billion initially, growing to about \$8.4 billion per year** as the exemption fully phases in. Cities and counties — including ours here in Sarasota, Charlotte, and Lee counties — would need to adjust. The amendment does include language limiting property tax revenue to core services like public safety, infrastructure, stormwater management, and education, but how each local government balances its budget will play out community by community.

Supporters argue homeowners deserve relief from years of rising tax bills and that voters — not politicians — should decide how much revenue local governments collect. Opponents warn that the lost revenue could mean service cuts or shifted costs onto businesses, renters, and non-homesteaded owners. Both of these are legitimate positions held by informed people. Your job as

a voter is to decide which trade-off you prefer — and now you know what the trade-off actually is.

## **Fiction #6: "Anyone who buys a home after December 2026 has to wait five years to get the exemption."**

**Fact:** This one is circulating widely, and it's a distortion of a real provision. The waiting period applies to **new Florida residents** — not to home purchases.

Here's what the amendment actually says: people who **establish Florida residency after December 31, 2026** would receive a *smaller initial exemption* that phases up over a period of up to five years before they qualify for the full expanded amount.

What that means in practice:

- **Current Florida residents are not affected.** If you already live here and you sell your North Port home and buy in Venice in 2027 — or anywhere else in the state — the waiting period does not apply to you. Buying a home doesn't restart any clock for existing residents.
- **New residents still benefit — just gradually.** Someone relocating from New Jersey in 2028 wouldn't be shut out for five years; they'd start with a smaller exemption that increases over time until they reach the full amount.
- **Nobody loses the current exemption.** The phase-in applies only to the *increased* exemption amounts. The existing homestead exemption structure remains in place for everyone who qualifies.

One practical note for anyone planning a move to Florida: establishing primary residency **on or before December 31, 2026** means immediate eligibility for the full expanded exemption if the amendment passes — no phase-in period at all.

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## **What Could This Mean for a Typical Southwest Florida Homeowner?**

Here's an *illustrative example* (your actual numbers depend on your county, city, and district millage rates — always verify with your county property appraiser):

Say you own a homesteaded home in North Port assessed at **\$350,000**.

- **Today:** With the \$50,000 exemption, you pay non-school taxes on roughly \$300,000 of value.
- **2027 (if passed):** With a \$150,000 exemption, you'd pay non-school taxes on roughly \$200,000.

- **2028 (if passed):** With a \$250,000 exemption, you'd pay non-school taxes on roughly \$100,000.

At typical non-school millage rates in our area, that 2028 change could mean savings of **a few thousand dollars per year** for many homeowners — while the school portion of your bill stays the same. Homes assessed at or below \$250,000 could see their non-school property taxes effectively reach zero.

Want to know what it would mean for *your* specific home? Reach out — we're happy to walk through your tax bill with you, no strings attached.



## What This Could Mean for the SWFL Real Estate Market

A few things we're watching as local REALTORS®:

**Affordability math changes.** Lower carrying costs on homesteaded properties could meaningfully improve monthly affordability for primary-residence buyers — especially first-time buyers and retirees on fixed incomes deciding between renting and owning.

**The homestead premium grows.** The gap in carrying costs between homesteaded and non-homesteaded properties would widen, which could influence how investors and seasonal buyers evaluate our market.

**Relocation appeal.** Florida already has no state income tax. A dramatically reduced property tax burden on primary residences would strengthen the case for buyers relocating from high-tax states — a trend we see every week here in Southwest Florida.



## The Bottom Line

- ◆ It's an exemption increase to \$250,000 by 2028 — not full elimination
- ◆ It applies to homesteaded primary residences only
- ◆ School taxes are not affected — you keep paying those
- ◆ It needs 60% approval to pass
- ◆ It comes with a real revenue trade-off for local services that voters should weigh honestly
- ◆ Current Florida residents face no waiting period — only new residents arriving after **Dec. 31, 2026** see a gradual phase-in

Whatever you decide in November, decide it with the FACTS.

Have questions about how this amendment could affect your home's value, your tax bill, or your buying and selling plans? **The Liss Lists Team** is here to help. Call or text us at **516-567-7616**, or schedule a free 30-minute consultation at our Calendly link at:

<https://bit.ly/Schedule30-minConsultation>

*This article is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice, nor an endorsement of any ballot position. Figures are based on the amendment as passed by the Florida Legislature on June 2, 2026, and illustrative examples are estimates only. Consult your county property appraiser or a qualified tax professional regarding your specific situation.*