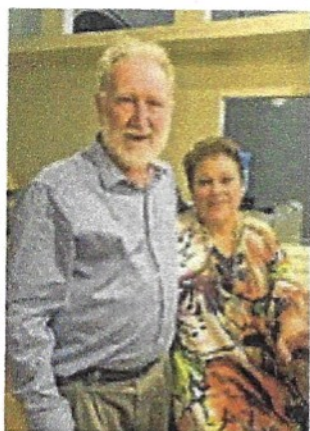


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Property taxes have jumped for Zoe Tosteson Losada and her husband, Freddy Losada. CHERI RAPELYE

Florida Looks at Scrapping Its Property Tax

BY ARIAN CAMPO-FLORES AND DEBORAH ACOSTA

Florida's leaders are considering a far-reaching remedy to cut the soaring costs of owning a home: ditching property taxes.

Killing property taxes would leave the state more reliant on its sales tax and strip local governments of revenue to fund everything from schools to social services. A full repeal is unlikely soon, but the idea is gaining political traction, reflecting the strain homeowners are under.

The property-tax system is among the top issues under discussion in the legislative session that began this month. Eliminating property taxes would be the first such move in the nation.

Republican Gov. Ron De-Santis urged the Legislature in his recent State of the State address to provide relief from such taxes. And Florida's lawmakers have filed dozens of bills on the issue, ranging from proposals to end property taxes to smaller tweaks to give targeted help to homeowners.

"People are getting crushed not just by home insurance but by property taxes," said GOP state Sen. Jonathan Martin, who is sponsoring a bill that would require a study on the elimination of property taxes be completed by October. "That American dream in Florida is taking five figures a year in local taxes."

Revolts against property taxes have erupted elsewhere in recent months as homeowners' tax bills have risen alongside home values. Property values in the U.S. increased 27%, adjusted for inflation, between January 2020 and July 2024, according to the Tax Foundation, a think tank.

"You're seeing a groundswell of opposition to property taxes generally"—one reminiscent of a wave of protest in the 1970s and 1980s that triggered ballot measures including Proposition 13 in California that capped property taxes, said Jared Walczak, vice president of state projects at the Tax Foundation.

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A number of states including Wyoming, Kansas and Montana are weighing significant property-tax limitations, he said. In November, voters in North Dakota rejected a ballot measure that would have eliminated property taxes.

Median home prices in Florida have skyrocketed, quadrupling in the Miami metro area since 2012 and more than tripling in the Orlando and Tampa metro areas, according to real-estate brokerage Redfin. Average home-insurance premiums in Florida have climbed, rising to \$3,731 in 2024 from \$1,973 in 2018, according to the Insurance Information Institute and state data.

Florida's effective property tax rate ranked 28th nationally in 2023, according to an analysis by the Tax Foundation. But as real-estate values have surged, the total amount levied has roughly doubled over the past decade, reaching more than \$55 billion in the 2024-25 fiscal year, according to a recent presentation by Azhar Khan, staff director of the Florida Senate's finance and tax committee.

In 2022, Zoe Tosteson Losada, now 69, purchased her dream retirement home in Palm Beach Gardens for \$809,000. About a year after the purchase, she saw her annual property-tax bill explode, to about \$10,700 from about \$6,000, because the value of the home was reassessed after changing hands.

She has since realized that the cost of the taxes, coupled with ballooning insurance costs, makes staying there unlikely. "I will not be able to retire in this house," said Tosteson Losada, who lives in the home with her retired husband, Freddy Losada, who is in his 80s, and their son.

DeSantis has said his goal is to get a constitutional amendment abolishing or reducing property taxes on the ballot in 2026, which would require at least 60% approval from voters to pass.

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