



REFRESHER: HB 7

LOCAL GOVERNMENT FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

Did You Know?

In [Sarasota County](#),

- A [2017 Citizen Opinion Survey](#) showed 61% of taxpayers surveyed do not want anything new that will cost them money.
- Yet commissioners did not entertain this sentiment when they looked at pursuing a 5% Public Service Tax (PST).
- Choosing a PST is very telling – these types of increases lack transparency compared to increasing the property tax rate, which the public would have been well aware of as property owners receive notices of proposed increases under the Truth in Millage Act.
- The PST doesn't require a personal notice of the proposed tax or of its public hearing. It is a new tax that many taxpayers won't know of until they have to pay it.
- **The goal of HB 7 is to eliminate instances like these by making sure local governments are transparent and accountable to the taxpayers.**

BACKGROUND

HB 7 increases local government fiscal transparency by focusing on helping citizens gain access to important information so they can be more engaged on important government decisions.

Last session's local government fiscal transparency bill, CS/HB 7065, was heard in two committees and passed the House but died in the Senate. It was reintroduced by Rep. Burton and was reported favorably by the Ways & Means Committee on October 10, 2017.

The bottom line: HB 7 aims to ensure local governments are responsible, transparent, and accountable with taxpayer dollars, which will help give Floridians confidence in their government.

BILL HIGHLIGHTS

- The bill would promote and enhance local government fiscal transparency as follows:
 - Requires easy public access to local government governing boards' voting records related to tax increases and issuance of tax-supported debt (phased in over four years).
 - Requires easy online access to property tax TRIM notices and a four-year history of property tax rates and amounts at the parcel level is also required (phased in over three years).
 - Requires additional public meetings and expands public notice requirements for local option tax increases, other than property taxes, and new long-term, tax-supported debt issuances.
 - Requires local governments to conduct and consider a debt affordability analysis prior to approving the issuance of new, long-term tax-supported debt.
 - Under current law, most local governments are required to have an annual financial audit.
 - The bill requires the auditor to report, based on an affidavit executed by the chair of the local governing board, whether or not the local government is in compliance with the provisions of the new act created by the bill.
 - The Auditor General must request evidence of corrective action from local governments found not to be in compliance with the Act.
 - Local governments must provide evidence that corrective action has been initiated within 45 days and evidence of completion within 180 days of such request.
 - The Auditor General must report to the Legislative Auditing Committee local governments that do not take corrective action.