
Illinois Tax Caps – Small Adjustments, A Beginning

In 1991 the Illinois General Assembly tax capped the collar counties surrounding Cook County. In 1995, Cook County was tax capped and other counties were given the ability to hold a referendum to tax cap themselves. As of April 1, 2003, 39 of 101 counties were tax capped while 9 county tax cap referenda have failed. No changes in the tax cap for operating levies have been made since its inception in 1991, although Limited Tax G.O. Bonds were introduced in 1995, helping governments to raise funds.

After 12 years of inflexibility, a new Democratic majority in the Senate and a new Democratic Governor have joined with the Democratic House to take steps to tweak the tax cap. These bills are on the Governor's desk.

- 1. Special Recreation** - costs including federally mandated property and facility accessibility responsibility and program inclusion costs have been carved out of the other operating (non-debt) levies. Levies for special recreation purposes will not be included in the tax cap levy calculations for Illinois Park Districts. (SB 1881)
- 2. Bonds Restored** – 16 Park Districts that had non-referendum G.O. bond levies in 1991, but not in 1994, or whose 1994 levy was less than 50% of the 1991 non-referendum G.O. bond levy had their non-referendum G.O. bonding restored by the General Assembly. The Forest Preserve District of Cook County and the Botanic Gardens and the Brookfield Zoo also benefit (SB 83).

The “camel’s nose is under the tent”, making other situations more likely to be considered on their merits, versus blocked solely to adhere to the “if you correct one situation, then everybody will...”philosophy. This may lead to a “take a number and stand in line” for the next few years in the General Assembly as others seek relief from tax cap imposed inequities and hardships.

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