

Legislation seeks assessment reform

Property owners would get more information

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Do you fully understand the assessment process that helps to determine your property tax bills?

A Lake County lawmaker is introducing a bill that would increase the information residents receive annually on their blue assessment cards and require quick answers for those whose assessment increases exceed 10 percent of the median for their neighborhood.

"My intention is to pass the bill this year, and I think it will pass," said state Sen. Michael Bond, D-Grayslake, who said the initiative was sparked by local calls for assessment reform.

Bond said the legislation, which he is introducing in the Senate and will be carried in the House by state Rep. Ed Sullivan Jr., R-Mundelein, is aimed at injecting more transparency and consistency into the assessment process at the township and county levels.

"The No. 1 thing is to empower property owners to understand the assessment process and determine when they get their blue card if they are being treated fairly," Bond said.

Bond credited Citizens Action Project, a Grayslake-based group that has researched local assessment issues and called for assessment reform, with doing much of the work that led to the proposed legislation.

"They played an enormous role. They've done exhaustive research," Bond said.

The group's president, John Wasik, said CAP is encouraging all residents to contact their representatives in support of the bill and assessment reform.

"There is still a lot of work to be done to ensure accountability and, most importantly, fairness," Wasik said.

The bill would apply to all counties with fewer than 3 million residents. Cook County would be excluded from the proposed new requirements.

It is unclear whether the state would help cover any additional costs to chief county assessment offices due to the new requirements it would place on them.

Bond said that because the offices should already have the information, and blue cards are already sent to property owners, he doesn't believe the legislation would spur much in the way of new costs.

Martin Paulson, Lake County's chief assessment officer, declined to comment on the legislative proposal Tuesday.
