

**In the Public's eye, is your 2008 Revaluation, a "knee-jerk" reaction or a Well Planned Project?**

At the end of the 2007 session of the General Assembly, the GREAT PLAN was introduced by Speaker Richardson. During the rest of the year, he toured Georgia touting his plan for eliminating the property tax and replacing it with an expanded sales tax on services. The plan continued to evolve even after the 2008 session got underway. Eliminating property tax then changed to imposing a cap on reassessments using 2008 as the base year. This idea had broad support among the legislature, ACCG, and others. However due to a variety of reasons, no significant tax reform measures were passed. The debate continues and some tax reform measures are likely to resurface for the 2009 Session and will likely include some provision for assessment caps.

That being said, many counties across Georgia have conducted major reassessments for their 2008 Tax Digests. We assessors and appraisers know that to have a successful complete revaluation in our counties requires considerable planning and at least a couple of years to implement. Now that those counties have mailed Change of Assessment Notices resulting from their planned reassessment projects, some elected officials, members of the public, and media have suggested that the reassessments were a "knee-jerk" reaction in anticipation of future law requiring assessment caps using 2008 values as a base for calculating them. Major reassessments, especially for those counties which have not maintained values, result in significant increases in individual property values. This along with the "caps" issue, and the overall poor housing market, has created a perfect storm as it relates to the public reaction to the 2008 reassessments.

If your county has implemented a total reassessment program for 2008, please make sure your elected officials, media, etc. are informed as to when you began the process, how much planning was involved, etc. to demonstrate that this didn't happen due to the "caps" issue.

If your county did conduct a revaluation in anticipation of the "caps" issue, hopefully you did so based on good market data and with a proper amount of planning and public presentations. While it is always preferable that your revaluation planning includes an early "buy in" from local officials and a good public relations campaign, **it's never too late!**

Also, for years we have heard that the reason counties do revaluations is because "the state makes us do it!" This has never been a good reason and it certainly has not played well with state legislators or the Department of Revenue. The reason we conduct revaluations is to ensure that taxpayers pay only their proportionate share of the overall tax burden as is contemplated in OCGA 48-5-306\* **A revaluation is no one's fault! It is about fairness and uniformity among taxpayers.**

Phil Hogsed  
GAAO Immediate Past President

\* "...The Board shall see that all taxable property within the county is assessed and returned at its fair market value and that fair market values as between the individual taxpayers are fairly and justly equalized so that each taxpayer shall pay as nearly as possible only such taxpayer's proportionate share of taxes." OCGA 48-5-306