



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Andrew Bailey
Attorney General of Missouri
207 W. High
P.O. Box 899
Jefferson City, MO 65102

Dear Attorney General Bailey,

I am writing to you as the Jackson County Executive to express my profound concern regarding the lawsuit filed by your office against Jackson County's property assessments. I respectfully request that you take immediate steps to withdraw this lawsuit, which poses significant risks to our county's educational institutions, public safety services, libraries, and mental health services.

The recent property assessments in Jackson County, which reflect the substantial rise in home values, have enabled taxing districts to adjust their rates while still meeting financial obligations. However, the ongoing legal challenge threatens to nullify these assessments, potentially resulting in catastrophic financial losses for our school districts and other public services. For example, the Lee's Summit School District alone stands to lose \$32 million, nearly one-tenth of its revenue, which would be devastating for our community.

Moreover, this lawsuit creates the potential for sizeable tax increases for tens of thousands of Jackson County residents to make up for the artificial reduction in valuations sought by the lawsuit. While the county remains confident in our legal argument as well as our reassessment process, the risk to our residents and our children is too great not to try everything we can to avoid the potential catastrophe that our school districts have warned the court about.

The increases that some residents have seen in last year's state-mandated reassessment were a combination of economic changes that have significantly increased home values and years, if not decades, of inconsistent and unfair property assessments in Jackson County that tended to have more to do with who you know than how much your property is worth.

It is important to highlight that four school districts, including the Fort Osage, Oak Grove, Independence, and Lee's Summit districts, have shared the potential catastrophic damage. However, they are not alone in this struggle. Each and every public and charter school in Jackson County will face irreparable harm simply due to a political attack on a county that has chosen to follow state law.



Taxpayers who believe their property is inaccurately valued already have options to address their concerns. They can challenge an assessment with the county's Board of Equalization and, if necessary, appeal to the State Tax Commission. However, an arbitrary reduction in some people's values will hurt our essential public services like public schools, as well as require those who have not seen dramatic increases in their property's value to pay more than their fair share of taxes.

It is important to note that the Missouri Supreme Court has previously dismissed similar class-action lawsuits, emphasizing the necessity for homeowners to complete the appeals process with the county and the State Tax Commission before seeking judicial relief. This legal precedent underscores the importance of following established procedures to ensure fair and accurate property assessments.

Additionally, housing market trends indicate a significant increase in property values in Jackson County, driven by heightened demand and external investments. The current assessments accurately reflect these market dynamics, and invalidating them would only offer temporary relief while exacerbating future challenges.

Jackson County has consistently adhered to lawful and equitable assessment practices, as demonstrated by our compliance with Section 137.115 and the Supreme Court's unanimous ruling in our favor. This lawsuit undermines our efforts and threatens the financial stability of our community.

I urge you to reconsider the implications of this lawsuit and to collaborate with Jackson County to address any concerns through constructive dialogue rather than litigation. By withdrawing this lawsuit, we can ensure that our schools, public safety services, and other vital entities continue to receive the necessary funding to serve our residents effectively.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank White, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Frank White, Jr.

Jackson County Executive