

SJR 14 Is About Fairness

By Councilman Ed Lawson

Member of the City of Sparks City Council

As a regional policymaker, I am disappointed by the campaign of misinformation that Washoe County Assessor Michael Clark has been spreading to unsuspecting residents of our great County, and of my fantastic City, the City of Sparks. His misleading statements are not only inaccurate, but they are factually wrong, and are only leading to voter confusion.

SJR 14 is designed to remove property tax inequities that can result when comparing homes of equal value. SJR 14 would have the effect of “resetting” accumulated depreciation and abatement back to zero upon the purchase of an existing home when an individual sells his or her home, thus ensuring the property taxes are the same as if the house was newly built.

Contrary to Assessor Clark’s stated position, passage of SJR 14 will NOT raise your property taxes if you remain in your current house. Even more importantly, SJR 14 gives YOU, the voter, the power to make the decision – at the ballot box in 2020 if approved by the 2019 Legislature. You see, SJR 14 would ask the voters whether THEY want to correct this inequity or not. It is the ultimate form of democracy, and we should all support it.

Yet, understanding this complex issue of depreciation and a reset at the time of a sale, can be confusing. Our County Assessor is preying on unsuspecting voters in Washoe County. Instead of going into the weeds to explain this complex issue, let’s use the following examples to help clarify the inequities that SJR 14 is trying to rectify.

In assessed year 2016, a typical \$250,000 Sparks house built in 1965 will pay just under \$1,000 in property tax. Comparatively, a house of equal value built in 2013 will pay approximately \$2,080, twice the amount of property taxes. Does the newer home use twice the amount of city services? I don’t think so! Paying twice the amount of property taxes for a home of relatively equal value makes no sense.

Now, I ask you, is that fair? Is that right? Is that equitable? I say NO, it is not. That is what the debate about SJR 14 is really all about. Plain and simple, no double talk, no complexity, SJR 14 is about fairness for the people of the City of Sparks and every resident of Washoe County.

Ed Lawson is a member of the Sparks City Council. Along with Sparks Mayor Elect Ron Smith and Washoe County Commissioner Kitty Jung, Ed is the longest serving elected official in the Truckee Meadows.