

'Major victory' for tax revolt group

Village League to Save Incline Assets says win was big; county sees it differently

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Maryanne Ingemanson
Village League to Save Incline Assets president

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An Incline Village group opposed to increased property valuations declared a "major court victory" this week as a pair of Carson City district judges sent property tax appeals to the State Board of Equalization for further scrutiny and review.

The Village League to Save Incline Assets some two years ago filled lawsuits to protest an average percent hike in their property taxes saying Washoe County Assessor Robert McGowan arbitrarily assigned high values to their views of Lake Tahoe.

This week league president Maryanne Ingemanson said the district judges said the state board will review if they did not equalize property taxes in Incline Village/Crystal bay with neighboring counties (namely, Douglas); if they did not "use approved rules" to "appraise our properties"; and whether the state department of taxation followed the mandate to annually make sure all counties were taxed equally.

Simultaneously, the tax league has a lawsuit pending for the removal of assessor McGowan.

This week's court order for review will help on all case fronts one league spokesman said.

"The ruling here helps us overall by leaps and bounds," Ingemanson said. "The judge said the assessor did not use the rules - it's an enormous win."

County assessor's office officials, however, didn't think the recent "victory" in court was so notable.

"First of all they're misrepresenting what happened in the court," said John Faulkner, chief deputy assessor. "The judge remanded the case back to the state board to ask for information as to whether or not they did review the different counties to see if there's an equalization issue...."

"That's it."

But members of the league maintain the court's decision to review may lead to a wholesale rollback of property taxes to 2001 in Incline.

"Out of all this incredible amount of work (we may see the) rebase of assessments in our area back to 2001," Ingemanson said. "Then, (the) assessments were fairly equal. (If rolled back) we will have a much lower tax base... the state board and department of taxation will have to work with us to try to achieve that result."

County assessors were hesitant to draw conclusions about a potential roll-back.

"That's fine if that's what (the league) thinks going to happen," Faulkner said. "I don't know, nobody knows, until the state board reviews the data and gets back to the judge - we don't know if there's an equalization issue or not."

But for now the league is confident the ruling and the remand is clearly in their favor.

"The (judge mandates) these new standards must be adopted," Ingemanson said. "This could (translate) to (tax) refunds plus six percent interest, plus attorney's fees."

"This is monster news."

An assessor's office spokesman said they'll take a more "wait-and-see" approach.

"Until we've we get a definitive statement we'll continue to do things the way we've done it," Faulkner said.