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Waiting for a decision

"It's the biggest tax case they've ever had in the state – it will effect everything."

Maryanne Ingemanson, League to Save Incline Assets

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While several members and key observers of Incline's tax revolt group have been waiting for weeks with baited breath for a state supreme court decision to come down upholding a district judge's decision to roll back tax assessments, one member cautioned that property owners in the region may have to keep waiting to exhale.

Maryanne Ingemanson, president of the League to Save Incline Assets, this week said the speculation that decision may not come down until after the election is something she now believes.

"We feel the reason for the delay is this case is so enormous and has such an overall effect on the entire state that the justices felt it should not be released prior to election," Ingemanson said, noting that the court's 90-day timeline for a decision set in June has since passed. "(A decision now) could affect any of the different elections in county or state level."

Indeed, two supreme court justices, Michael Douglas and Nancy Becker, slated to be the author of the decision, are up for election in November.

"Let's just say in light of this information we're looking forward to a decision shortly after the election," Ingemanson said.

Tax revolters feel that any decision will lead to action in the next legislature, which is slated to begin Feb. 5, 2007.

During the last legislative session (April 2005), the legislature passed a 3 percent cap on tax bills for residential property and a 6.9 percent cap for commercial property in Washoe County.

Revolters note the cap is not a permanent solution, hoping the next session codifies not only some kind of cap, but also may include a constitutional amendment on the valuation process so that different appraisers doesn't equal a different valuation.

Incline's predicament, combined with other warnings about people being forced out of their homes, helped precipitate the Nevada legislation. Now, an interim committee is studying a constitutional amendment to change the way property taxes are figured.

Similar battles are being fought in Maine, New Jersey, Florida and even Idaho, where Ingemanson was recently asked to be a key-note speaker.

For now, if current district court decisions stand, Terry Shea of the Washoe County District Attorney's Office, noted it could call into question the equalization of all property values in Washoe County.

An outcome tax revolters hoped for.

When Carson City District Court Judge William Maddox ordered property tax refunds for 17 Incline Village property owners in early February, the county district attorney's office filed an emergency stay with the Supreme Court. The stay was denied and eventually led to the supreme court hearing.

"Yes, property tax valuation, it sounds like a thrilling topic," Ingemanson joked. "But you get the picture, this is an issue all over, we are at the forefront a lot of people will be looking at these rulings.

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