

Richard Smith
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LD 183

Good day, committee members,

Publicly-owned land, exempt from local property taxes, is a contributing factor to a property tax problem that is slowly choking the life out of Maine's small communities. While these lands are exempt from property taxes, that does not prevent their value from being figured into a community's total land valuation. In all reality, these lands are still being taxed, but the burden of the tax is being spread through the property tax payers of the entire community.

Small communities, like my hometown of Beals, are seeing our property taxes skyrocket over the last few years. From 2019 through 2024, I have seen a 47.41% increase in my property taxes, while having made zero improvements to my land or the structures upon that land. The majority of that rise has been since 2021. With a projected county tax increase of 20% or more for Washington County in 2025, I can expect to see my property taxes go up another 20% or more from 2024 levels. This is ridiculous!!

This trend of rapidly-rising property taxes inevitably leads to families being forced to move out of these communities. I've lived on this island for my entire life, and I would very much like to stay here, but even with a respectable income and a 2-income household I can't afford a property tax increase trend of nearly 50% in half a decade for another 30 years. Not many can.

This is why I urge you to cap publicly-owned land at 50% per county. 50% is still far too high, but it's a start to fixing a problem that is fleecing rural/coastal Maine's families and business owners.

Thank you,
Richard Smith
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