

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing as a property owner in Big Lake Township, Maine, to share my concerns regarding recent property tax increases resulting from the most recent revaluation in the unorganized territory.

In reviewing my own assessment and comparing it with other properties in the township, I was struck by the wide discrepancies in how similar parcels appear to have been valued. In particular, waterfront land was assessed at significantly different rates, with no obvious connection to recent sales or fair market value. These inconsistencies make it difficult for property owners to understand or anticipate their tax obligations and undermine confidence in the valuation process as a whole.

As a result of these valuation changes, my family's property experienced a dramatic increase in assessed value that far outpaced any reasonable change in market conditions. While I fully accept the responsibility to pay property taxes and support public services, sudden and extreme tax increases create financial strain and uncertainty for ordinary Mainers who simply want to retain family properties.

I was happy to learn that the Legislature is considering reforms to property taxation in Maine's unorganized territories, particularly efforts aimed at improving predictability and fairness. In addition to addressing valuation practices, I respectfully urge the Committee to consider limits on mill rate increases so that tax burdens do not rise sharply due to a combination of higher valuations and mill rate adjustments. Reasonable constraints on mill rate growth would help ensure that property taxes increase in a more gradual and predictable manner.

I am also troubled by proposals that would limit relief solely to primary residences. In communities like Big Lake Township, many properties are camps or seasonal homes that have been owned and maintained by Maine families for decades. In my experience, these are not luxury or investment properties, and their owners often have deep personal and family ties to the area.

I respectfully urge the Committee to consider reforms that address not only the size of valuation increases, but also the consistency, transparency, and cumulative tax impacts of both valuations and mill rates so that future revaluations do not produce similar disparities or unexpected tax shocks.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your service to the people of Maine.

Sincerely,
Mark Ranalli