

ATTACHMENT

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REPUBLICAN PARTY OF TITUS COUNTY

August 29, 2011

The Honorable Brian Lee
Titus County Judge
100 W. 1st Street
Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455

Dear Judge Lee,

We are writing to express our concern about the proposed Titus County tax rate increase. While the issue with the potential lower value of the Luminant power plant needs to be addressed in the budget process, we believe there is plenty of scope for it to be covered using budget cuts rather than tax increases. With the current fragile state of the local and national economy, now is not the time to be raising taxes.

In recent years the Titus County Commissioners have shown little taste for prudent economic management. In 2006 the certified total property value in Titus County was \$3.1 billion. In 2009 it peaked at \$3.9 billion, an increase of 27% and has since dropped back to \$3.7 billion, but still 20% above 2006. Only \$145 million of the \$800 million value increase came from new construction, so most of the increase came from revaluations and rising property values. Prior to the hiring of Mr. Babcock as Chief Appraiser in mid 2006, the Titus County Appraisal District was a mess. A good part of the property value increase can be attributed to Mr. Babcock doing what he was hired to do and get the appraised values straightened out. Much of the increased value came from industrial equipment, pipelines and electric utility property with only around \$100 million from single family residences.

Our elected and appointed officials love to tell us that we have low tax rates in Titus County. While that is somewhat true, the tax rates could be much lower. We are blessed with a large property tax base with two power plants, oil and gas production, pipelines, numerous manufacturing plants and a considerable retail property including Walmart, Lowes and Home Depot. Titus County is effectively the shopping destination for a four county area capturing considerable sales tax from Franklin, Camp and Morris counties. Instead of using these advantages to lower taxes and make Titus County even more successful, our County Commissioners have squandered it on ever increasing pay for themselves and their employees. The only time they showed any restraint with pay increase was in 2010 when there were several contested county elections.

If you work for Titus County you have had a pretty successful recession. You have not been laid off, your hours have not been cut, you have not lost your medical insurance, your job has not moved to Colorado, you have not had to take a pay cut, and you are not having to sell your cattle due to the worst drought in 50+ years. In fact, you have on average seen your salary increase by 13% over 3 years from 2007 and 2010. The Commissioners increased their own annual salaries by over \$6,000 from \$47,659 to \$54,017 over those three years.



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With the county property tax base falling it is only appropriate that those who benefited from the higher values now take a cut as the values fall, starting with the Commissioners salaries.

One glaring anomaly that stands out in the Titus County budgets is that the Sheriff is paid slightly less than the Commissioners. Surely the undoubtedly full time job of leading the fight against crime in the entire county is worth significantly more than the often part time job of fighting potholes in one quarter of the county?

Sincerely,

Sue Evenwel

Titus County Republican Party,
Chairman

With the unanimous approval of the full Titus County Republican Party Executive Committee

Nigel Christopher - Vice Chairman

Madison Barrett

Ginger Shaffer

Judy Kent

Maxine Patton

Jim Ballard

Emily Aikman

Tim Rovell

Bud Spence

Don White

Nelda Logan

Don Little

Angie Criss

Tony Mize

Myra Powell

Bob Philpot