

Homestead Exemption Act

Population growth is the one of the main issues facing the legislature in this session, according to state representative John Witwer who lives in Evergreen. He believes this legislature will immediately need to address new programs to take care of increased transportation needs and housing. In addition, he wants to look at legislation to enable our current older population who are being taxed out of their homes, to be able to remain in them.

Witwer believes the answer in addressing population growth lies within the issue of local control versus state mandated control. If you have a local system then each area must develop their own standards and maintain cooperative ties with adjoining communities. These standards can work within the county framework, yet give the citizens of Evergreen a means of controlling the population density within their communities.

At this time our state population is approximately 750 people per square mile. According to Witwer, using state wide mandates to control population may be to our best interest because transportation needs could be dictated as a result of population densities. But once the densities are filled out in the suburban areas then communities such as Evergreen will have to absorb the new growth.

One of the important issues is to control leapfrog development as seen in the Superior, Erie and Dacono area as a result of the cap put on population growth within the city of Boulder. People have been driven out to these areas and the transportation crunch increases along the 1-25 corridor.

These communities around the Boulder area are growing because they offer affordable housing. This is one of the main issues in the Evergreen area. Witwer believes that to have a viable community we need both young and older people living here. Instead of pushing people out to Dacono and increasing the transportation pressure such as was done in the Boulder area, if Evergreen area builders were given tax incentives to build affordable housing within the community all population stratas could live here.

One of the incentives Witwer is sponsoring along with Senator Evans is the Homestead Exemption Bill. This proposal will be put on the ballot as a referendum in November. Currently some of the initiatives proposed in the bill include tax credits on the first \$300,000.00 worth of valuation for homeowners who have lived in their home more than 10 years and are 65 or older. This credit would amount to 30% of the assessment of the home. Since only 12% of our population is over 65, Witwer does not think this would encroach on school or local taxes. This he believes is a beginning piece of legislation that will start the exemption process but needs support from citizen input.

This legislation was passed in 2000 and revived in 2007.

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