

## PROPERTY TAXES

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, Pittsburgh, PA

January 20, 2011

By Herbert Barry III, Oakland, PA

The Post-Gazette reported that Allegheny County Councilman Chuck McCullough proposes a "residential property taxpayer bill of rights" ("Councilman Calls for Protections in Advance of Reassessments," Dec. 28). The term is misleading. The owner of property has a privilege, not right, to exclusive possession of part of the local government's territory. The government should obtain compensation for its excluded residents by taxing part of the property's assessed value. Most legislators own property. The majority of them own property that is more valuable than average. This "bill of rights" would decrease the amount of tax collection that benefits the other residents. The proposal includes an increase in the homestead exemption, a fee for appeals by municipalities and school districts that assessments are too low, a refund of the cost of an appraisal when the taxpayer's appeal reduces the assessed value, and postponement of part of the higher tax after an increase in the assessed value.

Current techniques for reducing taxes on privileged property owners include higher taxes on wages, salaries, and sales. These alternative taxes are detrimental for the economy in addition to the taxed individuals. Higher taxes on property owners are preferable substitutes.

( The writer is a professor emeritus at the University of Pittsburgh.) <<

EROWDSWELL  
JAN-FEB 2011