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Santa Rosa County Property Appraiser

Chris Jones, CFA
Escambia County Property Appraiser

June 2, 2010

Honorable Charlie Crist
Governor of Florida
PF-05 The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Crist:

As a result of the Deepwater Horizon/British Petroleum (BP) oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, property values are likely to be adversely affected in areas along the coastline of Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties. The potential impact of this incident could be staggering. Under existing law, the tentative loss in property values due to the spill will not be reflected until the 2011 tax roll. Therefore, there will be no accounting for this loss in 2010, unless executive or legislative action is taken.

We ask you to consider an executive order imposing tax relief for property owners in 2010 in the affected counties. If you conclude an executive order is not the proper manner for granting such relief, we ask that you call for a special legislative session or include this issue within the call for the special session. The spill is also likely to impact other counties as the oil spreads.

Precedent for tax relief as the result of this type of extraordinary event was established when the Legislature passed Laws of Florida, 2004-474, in the wake of the 2004 hurricane season.

The following summarizes our view of how property values might be affected:

1.) Commercial Properties

These properties are bought and sold based primarily on their ability to produce income. When the oil hits the beaches, cancellations will ensue and an income drop is inevitable. We have already seen a drop in reservations just due to the spill itself. However, when it comes ashore, it will have a devastating effect on commercial property values along the coast.

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2.) Residential Properties – Vacant Land

These properties are some of the hardest hit in the wake of the recession and the stigma associated with the hurricanes of 2004 - 2005. They are also struggling to keep their homes due to the high cost of insurance associated with these properties. When the oil comes ashore, these properties will suffer yet another financial blow.

We are concerned for the taxpayers of our respective counties who are already struggling with the economic down-turn and the resulting declining property values. When property values decline along the coast due to BP's negligence, the affected citizens should be allowed some adjustment to their tax burden. Moreover, the affected counties should expect reimbursement for that revenue loss. Also, a tax increase or redistribution of the tax burden should not be passed on to the rest of our citizens.

Governor Crist, we appreciate your commitment to Florida and our counties. The recent influx of over one million dollars for advertising did not go unnoticed. Please consider an executive order or special session to aid our local property owners in the wake of this huge disaster.

Sincerely,

Gregory S. Brown, CFA
Santa Rosa County Property Appraiser

Chris Jones, CFA
Escambia County Property Appraiser

cc: Honorable Jeff Kottkamp
Lisa Echeverri