

First of all, let me begin by saying good morning and thank you to Mr. Roemer and Mr. Blessing for allowing me to speak. My name is Leonard Gilbert and I am a resident of 6812 Glencairn Court in Mentor, OH.

I wanted to speak about the ever-increasing property taxes and the reality of what is unfolding as we continue on this path. We have gathered **information** to support our concern for the negative impact that is expected from the sexennial tax reappraisals. There will be artificial increases across the board that will result in property values increasing 30% **on average**. In some counties, there have been documented cases where the increase in value is up to 50%. In reality, they will be paying taxes on unrealized gains. This is not sustainable, **or acceptable since we are actively destroying lives and leaving a vapor trail of destruction for the next generation**. Not only are we hurting people on fixed incomes, but it also negatively impacts potential **first-time** home buyers.

I am leading an initiative along with some other Christians and patriots to eliminate the property tax. This is not to say that I am not willing to pay taxes. It is only reasonable for an individual to pay taxes for essential services that are provided by the local entity. The idea is to change the mechanism so that it is not tied to the owner's property.

We are not only looking at this from a financial perspective, but we are also looking at this from a biblical perspective. For those of you who identify as Christians, I hope that you are blessed to hear the words that are spoken. The statement is very simple. No tax should have the power to leave someone homeless. And my colleague and I always state, that any tax, if unpaid, causes a citizen to become homeless is immoral. At the moment, we are not true owners **of our property**, and we are **merely** leasing from

the government. If anyone does not pay their taxes for 3 consecutive payments, **they** will quickly find out who truly owns their home. It should also be noted that **the** lack of ownership destroys the right of inheritance which negatively impacts the transfer of wealth by hampering the ability to work toward economic prosperity, and it is also a direct attack on the family. In a nutshell, the property tax is sucking the life out of these communities.

By continuing to support such a system there will be inevitable consequences because we are in direct violation of the following commandments. First of all, we are breaking the 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment that states thou shall not steal. It is clear in Scripture that land was given to families so they could enjoy and develop it for future generations. So, if they were taxed on the property that they own, that would be outright theft. With that in mind, it is not only stealing but the tax is illegitimate. In addition to theft, we are also breaking the Ninth Commandment which forbids bearing false witness by lying to someone by giving them the impression that they own it, and we are taking money for the public good. Just because it is legal it does not make it right. And it also violates the Tenth Commandment which forbids coveting. That is the desire to take someone's property.

Now we know that trying to eliminate the property tax is going to be a heavy lift. **However, we believe that it is important to educate the younger generations on how they have been, and are being deceived, by the use of property taxes.**

As we work toward **our** goals, we are **asking for the** Joint Committee on Property Tax Relief Review and Reform to find ways to provide some immediate **tax** relief to keep people in their homes and not just transfer the problem to another area. **This** may include but is not limited to, eliminating the school tax for

seniors, realistic budgeting, and redefining the role of government. Which at the moment is growing at the expense of the destruction of the family. **Those actions** will help to set the stage for the long-term goal of elimination **of the property tax**.

My colleagues and I would be more than happy to work with the committee or other officials as needed to help work toward providing immediate relief to the taxpayers. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and I look forward to hearing from you.