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Injustice of property taxes

I must take issue with the Jan. 12 op-ed “Looming fiscal threat will require school finance reform,” by three members of the Charleston County School Board. While no one disagrees with the need to provide quality education for our children, throwing more money at the problem will not solve what is basically a societal issue — the lack of a family unit supporting education.

We have dedicated teachers who provide quality education in our system but, without a stable family support system at home, student motivation is lacking, homework is not completed, and our school system essentially becomes a day care center for many.

Case in point: One of my children left a local private school for a Charleston County Public School experience. This teen received an excellent education and informed my wife and me that all the resources were there. Our student despaired at how many fellow students just seemed to wander the halls, never taking advantage of the excellent teachers and programs available.

Reforming Act 388, which gave us some property tax relief, is not the answer. Without it our home taxes would be doubled. Next to the “death tax,” property tax is one of the most despised in that it drives families from their homes, thus destabilizing and “gentrifying” neighborhoods. Societal stability depends on family stability. Being able to remain in one’s home fosters both and provides a platform to motivate learning.

The basic injustice of property taxes is that it has no relationship to one’s ability to pay as evidenced by home values exponentially outpacing increases in income. It affects all homes, both great and small.

If one is disabled, there is no disabling of this burden. In essence, as long as there is a tax on one’s home, there is no freedom of home ownership as the homeowner, who can potentially retire a mortgage, is forever paying rent to a government policy that treats our home values as a personal ATM. This is a scourge that violates the sanctity of one’s home.

In 2006 NoHomeTax.Org realized 20 years of civic education with the passing of Act 388, reducing home property taxes by 50 percent. The only reform needed to Act 388 is to expand it to its full conclusion by raising the state sales tax by 1-cent, thus eliminating all property taxes on owner occupied homes.

I previously addressed this issue in an op-ed in The Post and Courier on May 3, 1995, “Property tax inequities threaten basic American freedoms.” It stated that now is the time “to restore the freedom of home ownership, to rise above the politics of envy, and to eliminate completely and forever this invasion of our privacy, our home, and our freedom.”

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