

Food for Florida



Helping out: A food drive for Florida's hurricane victims ended this week at Grandview Elementary School in the Clarenceville School District which includes southeast Farmington Hills. First grader Adam Green helps teacher Joan Frost fill empty boxes with food brought in by students. The students donated 11 boxes of clothes and more than 350 cans and packages of food and household items. Helping out in the background are fifth graders Randy Pelka (left) and Joe Johnson.

JIM JACOBSON/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Realtors, League debate cut and cap tax proposal

BY VALERIE OLANDER

BRYAN WATERS

Oakland County executive candidate L. Brooks Patterson turned to the camera and candidly told the viewing public to expect a 15-20 percent property tax hike next year if Proposal C — the Republican-sponsored cut and cap property tax relief plan — falls in November.

"This may be the last chance for a meaningful property tax cut in Michigan," he warned. Michigan State University economist Ruth Beier rolled her eyes. She said the state assessors association is anticipating a 10-percent increase over the next two years if the proposal fails.

"Proposal C makes about as much sense as having a lobotomy for a headache. There are no free lunches out there. You can't create a cost without some way to pay for it," she said, adding that C passing would only create the need for another tax increase further down the road.

The statements ended an hour-long debate sponsored by the Birmingham-Bloomfield Board of Realtors' political and governmental affairs committee. The debate was filmed at the United Artist Studio in Royal Oak and will be cablecast on public access stations throughout the area to educate voters on the issue.

TV-2 news anchor Bill Gallagher hosted the event. The proponents of the Cut and Cap plan, Patterson and Lansing Realtor Dennis Goff, treasurer of the Michigan Association of Realtors, insisted the state's revenue growth would help reimburse the tax dollars lost by capping assessments.

The opposition, Beiers and Barbara Moorhouse, secretary/treasurer of the state League of Women Voters, said dedicating future revenue growth to property tax reimbursements would either result in reductions in expenditures to other state departments or an increase in state taxes.

The debate was attended by nu-

■ 'This may be the last chance for a meaningful property tax cut in Michigan.'

L. Brooks Patterson

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Ruth Beier
economist

merous local Realtors and members of the Michigan Association of Realtors. MAR has supported the cut and cap plan, however, the local chapter is "remaining neutral," said Joan Bennett a BBAR member.

The cut and cap plan was compared to Proposition 13 in California by Beiers and Moorhouse, where the capping of assessments has had devastating effect on schools and the real estate market. Patterson called the comparison a "scare tactic."

According to a study by the Institute for Public Policy and Social Research at MSU, of which Beiers is the associate director, California home buyers in 1990 paid up to 17 times more in property taxes than those who purchased identical homes before 1978 (when Proposition 13 was approved by voters) since homes are reassessed at market value when sold. The inequity

in property tax liabilities has discouraged home sales in California, the study concluded.

Goff disputed the claim since California assessments were limited to 1 percent. Michigan's assessment cap would be 4 percent, he said.

"I don't see any adverse effects anywhere near California's," Goff insisted. "Realtors are concerned. We don't want people to stay in their homes. I don't see it causing any type of lock-in effect."

Beiers responded: "The lock-in effect is a very serious concern when a home is being taxed 17 percent higher than its neighbor. It will happen here. It surprises me that any Realtor can support this."

Local Realtor Mike Jones, a member of the BBAR, said the state is "obviously in need of reform."

"This isn't the answer, but it's a proposal," he said.

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