



NEBA News

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November- December 2008

Retail Executive Addresses NEBA

by: **Jim Ashlock**

Randy Miller, executive vice president of the Florida Retail Federation, drew a capacity crowd to the Sept. 9 NEBA luncheon where he outlined the current retail situation in Florida, chastised failed opportunities for constructive tax reform and delivered a stinging rebuke to local government for its spending habits.

Miller was a member of the recent Taxation and Budget Reform Commission that made recommendations for constitutional amendments, which in his opinion blew a good chance to address tax reform.

He labeled three amendments proposed by the Commission, which were subsequently thrown out by the courts, as no more than "political chicanery." Among these was the notorious Amendment 5, the so-called "Tax Swap" amendment. "We did some appropriate work," he said of the Committee, "but we should have done a lot more."

He was particularly critical of the Save Our Homes law that caps property tax increases on

homesteaded homes to 3 percent a year. And he added frustration at the portability clause that enables home buyers to transfer this limitation to a new home from their old one. Such



From l to r- Bill Moore, Peggy Munroe, Randy Miller

policies have created sharp inequities between what people pay in taxes on their homes.

Miller's talk was attended by several VIPs including Bert Hartsfield, Leon County tax assessor; Bill Gunter, former state insurance commissioner; and Brian Desloge, Leon County commissioner.

Noting that some homeowners were disappointed that larger property tax deductions did not result from Amendment One that was passed earlier, Miller stressed that this was not Hartsfield's fault.

"Bert was doing what the state

tax department told him to do," Miller said. "He has no control over the formula he's required to apply."

Hartsfield entered into the discussion, expressing his own frustration that a more uniform property tax formula was not available. Both he and Miller condemned Save Our Homes as the culprit. But when asked if the legislature might someday repeal that law, Miller declared, "Never." The reason, simply, is that people who benefit from the law will fight to keep it.

Miller opened his address with a charge that governments across Florida have forgotten who their constituents are. Local

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NEBA News

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The North East Business Association publishes NEBA News bi-monthly. Articles of interest are welcome.

Publication of submitted materials is subject to review and space available. Article deadline is the 1st day of the month of publication.

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Spotlight on: Lynn Wollschlager

Lynn Wollschlager, founder of Carpet One Floor & Home at 3333 Capital Circle, N.E., is a charter member of NEBA and a longtime figure on the Tallahassee business scene.

He's been in his present location since 1982 and recalls NEBA's formation when the state began expanding Capital Circle.

"The state was advising people to avoid the road during construction, which would have really hurt us." Lynn said. "So the businesses got together and worked with the engineers to provide signage and access so we could keep operating."

From that cooperative campaign came the key business organization of Northeast Tallahassee and the community's most aggressive advocate of free enterprise.

Lynn entered the flooring business in 1961 when he founded The Carpet Shop at 3rd Ave. and North Monroe, next door to his father's Superior Dry Cleaners. He'd learned the fundamentals of flooring material while working at Sears during college. In 1987, at his new location, he affiliated with Carpet One, the world's largest floor covering retailer with over 1,000 outlets. Lynn is number 79 among those outlets.

A native of Winston-Salem, NC, he came here in 1948 when his father went into the local dry



cleaning business. Lynn is Class 1955 of Leon High School, where he played football and is today enshrined in the school's Hall of Fame. At FSU he was a Sigma Chi member, graduating in 1960. At FSU he met a Quincy girl, Georgianna. They married in 1958, had two children, Susan and David, and were active in Trinity United Methodist Church. David is now president of Carpet One Floor and Home, Lynn carrying the title of Founder. Susan's husband is a pilot for United Airlines. Georgianna passed away in 2005.

Lynn is active in local organizations, having been president of the Tallahassee Rotary Club and Tallahassee 100 Club and Second V.P. of the Florida's Builders' Association., the highest rank afforded a non-construction member of that group. He's a Golden Chief and avid FSU supporter.

We are proud to have him as a member of NEBA!

NEBA Supports Property Tax Reduction

by: Jim Ashlock

It wasn't everything NEBA wanted, but it was more than we expected to get.

On Tuesday, Sept. 16, a NEBA team led by board members Peggy Munroe and Stephen Hogge appeared before the county commission to oppose a proposed increase in the county's property tax rate. The commission had indicated it would hold fast for a rate of \$7.99 per \$1,000 assessed value, a 10 percent boost over the current rate. This increase would have fallen mainly on local businesses, since homeowners were less impacted because of a state-mandated doubling of their homestead exemption.

Despite a large and vocal turnout of social services advocates, the commission meeting was

quickly thrown into a deadlock when Commissioner Bryan Desloge proposed a full rollback of the rate to \$7.68 per \$1,000. Desloge seemed to base his proposal to some extent on a letter sent to the commission by NEBA's Hogge in which he stressed that reserve funds were available to ease the budget pressure.

Commissioners Ed DePuy and John Daily sided with Desloge, but Cliff Thaele, Bill Proctor, Bob Rackleff and the chair, Jane Sauls, refused to budge on the \$7.99 rate. Since the matter required a "super majority" of five votes, the commission was deadlocked.

There was much heated debate, and at one point it was proposed that the issue be tabled until a later date. However, legal advisors reminded the commission that the

deadline for approving a budget was approaching and any other meetings on the matter might cause complications and require issuance of public notices.

During a recess, a compromise was reached on a \$7.85 rate per \$1,000. This followed a decision to reduce stormwater and transportation funding from \$6.1 million to \$5.1 million and to take \$1 million from reserves. This quickly passed with Daily's support, although Desloge and DePuy voted against it.

NEBA's position is that while it opposed any increase in the tax rate, the figure finally adopted was considerably less than what the county commission was driving for, in effect lessening the impact on local businesses. Without question, NEBA's involvement played a big role in this.

Come Join Us At The NEBA Holiday Party

NEBA President Bill Moore would like to invite all NEBA members to our annual holiday party on December 9, from 6 - 8 P.M. The holiday party is in lieu of our monthly luncheon meeting and will be held at Bill's house located at 322 Desoto Street.

There is no charge except for a new unwrapped toy for the Toys for Tots program. The value of the toy is your decision. NEBA supports the Toys for Tots program and we look forward to seeing you at the party.

ABOUT TOYS FOR TOTS

Toys for Tots is the Marine Corps' premier community action program, one of the nation's flagship charitable endeavors, an American tradition and a national treasure. For 51 years, Marines have been the unchallenged leaders in looking after needy children at Christmas. The Toys for Tots message of hope for the future has motivated youngsters to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and com-



munity leaders. Toys for Tots has earned the distinction as a program which plays an important role in helping youngsters emerge from a background of poverty to adulthood as assets to society. Toys for Tots not only benefits children, but also has a positive impact on communities, on businesses - large and small, on the Marine Corps and on the nation. Toys for Tots is one vehicle for addressing the issue of poverty among children.

Calendar

NEBA meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at Lucy Ho's- 1700 Halstead Blvd. from 1:00 p.m.- 2:00 p.m. Cost is \$9.00 per person

November 11- Robert Parrish- Parrish Properties and Developments- speaking on the local commercial real estate situation

December 9- Holiday party- Bill Moore's Home- 332 Desoto Street- (Los Robles neighborhood) 6:00pm- Admission- an unwrapped toy

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governments particularly have forgotten that they collect taxes for basic public services. He said a failure of the tax reform committee he served on was to not put a spending cap on local governments.

"Why does my local government give tax money to a charity that I might not choose to support," Miller asked. "Government should not be supporting charitable organizations," saying that was the job of United Way, local businesses and individuals.

As for the Florida retail situation, Miller said his Retail Federation members know it is bad right now.

During July sales and use tax collections by the Florida Department of Revenue were \$1.17 billion, or 6.02 percent, below what the state anticipated. Since August 2007 revenue collection in this category has been short of expectation anywhere from 3 to 7 percentage points.

Newsletter compliments of:

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