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The Messenger (Troy)

## Taxes could go up in the county

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By Ryan McCollough

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The Pike County Commission has sent a proposed bill to state Sen. Brian Taylor, R-Prattville, that could raise property taxes in parts of the county.

The tax increase would be used for a variety of expenditures throughout by eight volunteer fire departments in the county.

“We get a tobacco tax right now, but it is declining,” said Ray Armstrong, secretary treasurer of the Pike County Firefighters Association and chief of the Spring Hill Volunteer Fire Department. “So we have asked the commission and Legislature for a little help.”

The proposition would raise the property taxes by two mills. A mill is equivalent to one-tenth of a penny.

“It’s a bad time to raise anyone’s taxes,” said Taylor, R-Prattville. “But this would go on the ballot in November, so the people would make the decision if they wanted it or not.”

Harry Sanders, county administrator for the Pike County Commission, said that for every piece of land valued at \$100,000 there would be a tax increase of \$20.

“There have been discussions of possibly changing the bill from an ad valorem property tax to a pay-per-household,” Sanders said.

The ad valorem tax would apply on any property in the county; while the household tax would apply only to land that has homes on it.

Armstrong said that he did not know of the discussions about changing the bill, and that the Firefighters Association had approved only the original ad valorem tax.

“The volunteer fire departments are just that, volunteer, and some are struggling due to lack of funding,” Taylor said.

The tax proposition, if approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives, would be added to the ballot in November’s general election.

The tax would not affect citizens of Troy or Brundidge, but would raise the property taxes of those in Banks, Goshen, Needmore, and residents of the unincorporated parts of the county.

Sanders said that residents in these areas would be the only ones to vote on it.

“The volunteer fire departments do an excellent job of fire protection in our county,” said Rep. Alan Boothe, R-Troy. “They provide a valuable service to the rural parts of Pike and Sen. Taylor and I will try to help them.”

But not everyone is in favor of the new tax increase.

Elizabeth Motes owns a farm near Goshen and would be affected by the tax increase.

“Every cost we have as far as raising cattle and chickens is up,” Motes said. “Money doesn’t go as far as it used to, so I am against it.”

*Troy University journalism student Ryan McCollough of Elba wrote this story as part of a project partly funded by the Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation.*

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