



Why TAB – Why Now?

County taxes and spending have been a concern for a number of groups and individuals over the years. Many have taken action and tried to slow the growth of spending, pointing out that it was dishonest and irresponsible to take advantage of inflated real estate valuations and homestead caps to run up double digit increases year after year. On balance, these efforts went nowhere. Those who benefit from county spending, whether they are richly funded special interests with something to gain, or loosely organized "user communities" of taxpayer funded programs, have pretty much controlled the agenda. No one who attempted to speak for the taxpayer has gained much traction.

In the most recent past though, conditions have begun to change. In four years, four county commissioners have been arrested and punished. An ethics commission and an office of Inspector General has been established. The community has begun to take notice of what happens in county government, just as they have awakened to the serious challenges we face from the unchecked growth of the federal government.

We are at a tipping point - almost half of Americans don't pay income tax, but receive benefits from the other half who do. Government employees at all levels receive much higher salaries and benefits than those doing similar work in the private sector, and they are almost totally immune to layoffs when the economy turns sour for the rest of us. This is a trend that will not end well.

There is something in the air - something afoot. People are taking an interest, going to meetings, getting involved in political campaigns. There is a feeling that we are on a precipice and that if we don't move quickly we will be swept into the void, that the country, the communities in which we live, are about to be irrecoverably changed. And some of us are resisting.

The tea party movement, which is a generic term, encompassing many different groups, large and small, has raised the banner of fiscal responsibility, smaller government, and free markets. At the local level, we believe that this energy can be directed at righting the ship - at raising the awareness that something is wrong, and convincing the elected leaders of the community that the time has come when we must look at things differently.

It is against this backdrop that TAB has formed to try yet again to get some traction on county spending that has grown much faster than the local economy. The real estate bubble raised valuations so high that the temptation to follow them with government spending was irresistible, though foolish in hindsight.

This is a starting point. We are well aware of the budget issues that exist with the School Board, the Children's Services Council, the Health Care District, the myriad other taxing authorities that for years have had a free hand. They are all on the TAB radar. For now though, we must focus on the budget under the control of the County Commission.

It must be emphasized that we are concerned with SPENDING, not taxes, fees, transfers, grants, or other sources on the revenue side. It is excessive SPENDING that is the problem - SPENDING within our means - solve that and the revenue side will take care of itself.

Our approach has 4 components:

- **QUESTION** - assumptions, staff, program recipients, other jurisdictions
- **PUBLISH** - our findings, analysis, speculation, conclusions
- **ENGAGE** - staffs, commission, constitutionals
- **SUPPORT** - provide cover and support for leaders who share our goals

WE WANT TO BE AN INDEPENDENT RESOURCE FOR LEADERS WILLING TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO

WILL YOU JOIN US?