

## FROM THE DESK OF COMMISSIONER BILL KENDALL

A LETTER TO THE EDITOR CONCERNING LOWE'S IN THE 06-18-09 ISSUE OF THE TOWNS COUNTY HERALD AND TOWNS SENTINEL ASKED THE FOLLOWING QUESTION WHICH DESERVES AN ANSWER.

Q. What have you, as commissioner, given away that the citizens of this county will have to pay in order to get Lowe's located here? I and many others think we have a right to know this cost before we allow this store to be located here.

A. I have not committed one penny of taxpayer money and I have not approved one penny of tax incentive to Lowe's. Lowe's has not requested nor have I given any variance of Towns County's Sign Ordinance. I have not granted any variance of any part of the Building Codes and Building Inspection Ordinance nor has Lowe's asked for any variance.

I have not promised Lowe's one penny for construction – nor has Lowe's asked for any. I have not approved a tax break for Lowe's. A Lowe's representative did present a proposal for reimbursing Lowe's a million dollar tax break over a ten year period, as they stated they have received in some other stores. I immediately informed the representative that I would not consider such a proposal, that it would not even be on the table for discussion, that I firmly oppose granting any retail business a tax incentive that would be unfair to all the other retail businesses and that all retail businesses should be operating on the same level playing field.

Lowe's representative responded that the tax issue was one of the items they must check that they had requested when they take their proposal back to the Real Estate Committee.

LEGISLATION TO INCREASE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION TO \$10,000.00 OF ASSESSED  
VALUE

Q. Does the tax legislation you had introduced that allows citizens to vote on Nov. 3, 2009 increasing homestead exemption from \$2,000 to \$10,000 include all property taxes?

A. NO. The legislation only includes your county taxes; it does not include your school taxes or city taxes. If the voters approve the legislation, everyone living in the unincorporated area of the county and in the cities of Young Harris and Hiawassee **will get a homestead exemption from paying any county taxes on the first \$25,000 of Fair Market Valuation of your home; which is assessed at 40% or \$10,000 of assessed value. You will not receive this tax exemption on the school tax or city tax you pay.** However; I did discuss this, at the time I had the legislation introduced, with some members of the Board of Education and some City Council members and at the time they were favorable to the proposal. Due to the short time left to get the legislation introduced, they never officially requested Rep. Allison to include them in the bill. However, if the voters approve the legislation in the Nov. 3, '09 election to raise county homestead exemption to \$10,000 the Representative could, upon request by the Board of Education or a City, introduce a bill in Jan. 2010 General Assembly to include them without having another referendum and it would take effect at the same time as the legislation I requested to be voted on Nov. 3, 2009 for the 2010 tax digest.

Q. If the voters pass the legislation on Nov. 3, 2009 will it apply to the 2009 tax digest?

A. NO. We did not have time to get the legislation passed for the 2009 tax digest; therefore, it will become effective for the 2010 tax digest.