



## ALEXANDRIA TAXPAYERS UNITED

115-D South Saint Asaph Street  
Alexandria, VA 22314

[www.atuonline.org](http://www.atuonline.org)

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November 15, 2006

Dear Mr. Mayor and City Council Members:

We have read with considerable distress a number of local media reports suggesting that you will soon raise our taxes – whether in the form of higher car taxes, specialty levies, and/or higher property tax rates – to ostensibly deal with a slowdown of incoming revenues. All this comes only a few short months after a local election where concerns about increases in the City’s budget and local taxes were prominently featured.

We understand that local governments hoping to operate efficiently require adequate resources. However, the City has had a massive influx of revenue over the past six years, with the real property tax base more than doubling (from \$14.4 billion in 2001 to \$32.9 billion in 2006). Unfortunately, the City’s general fund spending has also increased by 60 percent over the past seven years, well ahead of inflation or any other reasonable measure of expansion. Had the City kept spending to the rate of population increase plus inflation, we could have avoided this situation.

Furthermore, there is little appetite among taxpayers for tax increases. In the *2006 Community Survey* prepared for the City, almost 75 percent of respondents said that they would want to either keep taxes at the existing level or decrease them. When asked, more than half of respondents considered taxes to be a serious problem, and taxes came in second only to traffic when respondents were asked to provide issues that they were concerned about. Now is not the time to pile more taxes on the backs of local residents and businesses.

We greatly appreciate the move by some City Council Members towards better budget accountability and financial transparency. We have publicly applauded this effort (*Alexandria Times*, 10-26) and we hope it provides a sound basis for future decision making. In that light, we would urge top management changes in any City Department that can’t or won’t provide, clear, accurate and transparent budgetary numbers. Simply put, if it can’t be publicly accounted for, it shouldn’t be paid for by taxpayers.

Finally, we hope you have heeded the call of the January Alexandria City’s Economic summit to create real tax relief and reform for local businesses. It has been more than nine months since this call went out, but we are unaware of any real progress. Please don’t extend that wait much longer. After all, why have an “Economic Summit” if its recommendations are not acted upon?

We understand that Alexandria’s long-overdue budget/tax reform and relief will take time, effort, and considerable thought. Please don’t let us down by taking the easy, but ultimately irresponsible, route of turning to tax hikes without considering other avenues.

Sincerely,

Bud Miller  
Alexandria Taxpayers United