

Incline Tax Case Might Go Countywide Rebates Could Clear County's Coffers

The Incline Village Property Owners tax case, dating to tax years 2002-03 is moving toward the finish line. Slowly, but moving. The several hundred property owners originally involved in the case may get some friends according to briefs filed recently. The attorney for the group, Suellen Fulstone wants all 8,700 property owners Incline Village and Crystal Bay to be involved. If the supreme court agrees, and if the state Board of Equalization finds in favor of the group, the total rebate could be as much as \$13 million.

But, there is more. Juanita Cox, a Washoe County property owner has a suit pending that hinges on the outcome of the Incline Village tax case. If the Incline Village homeowners get their rebate, then her suit asks that Washoe County property owners also get their taxes rolled back accordingly, and that rebate would be stupendous. The Incline Village rebates would come from Washoe County, the Washoe County School District, the State of Nevada, and the Northshore Fire Protection District.

The argument started when former Washoe County Assessor Bob McGowan did some allegedly creative assessing at Incline Village, not county wide. Such things as view of the lake, number and age of trees, and other items became taxable on the property lists, but not in other parts of the county.

Incline Village residents claim there is a state law against such practices, and the law suits have bounced through the courts since.

In 2006, the Washoe County Board of Equalization agreed with the homeowners and lowered values of property in the area. At that point, the Washoe County District Attorney, Dick Gammick got involved and filed appeals, and is currently representing the defense in current matters before the supreme court and state Board of Equalization. His representative, David Creekman has agreed with Suellen Fulstone that all 8,700 property owners should be plaintiffs in the case.

The supreme court has an emergency plea at this time, which would determine whether or not all property owners be involved before the state board. If the board rules in favor of the property owners, it could also mean that taxes for the following year might also be lowered, which again would create rebates in the millions of dollars.

Because of the current economic picture in which most governments in the state are strapped to the point of creating layoffs and reducing wages, the possibility of politics coming into play in this matter is very real.

#