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PROPERTY APPRAISER GARCIA PRAISES PASSAGE OF HOUSE BILL 1279 URGES PROPERTY OWNERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ITS TAX RELIEF FEATURES

(MIAMI, May 21, 2010) – Miami-Dade County Property Appraiser, Pedro J. Garcia has welcomed the Florida Legislature's unanimous passage of House Bill 1279, which he says will provide relief to some property owners facing back-taxes for new buildings, building additions or building improvements that previously escaped taxation.

He urges property owners to take advantage of the tax relief benefit when the law goes into effect on July 1st.

Previously, Florida law required all county appraisers to retroactively assess back-taxes for up to three years, for new buildings and building improvements which had "escaped taxation."

Concerned that this amounted to punitive action when it was not the fault of the property owner, Mr. Garcia raised the issue with State Representative David Rivera of Miami, who chairs the House Governmental Operations Committee. The result of their discussions was the introduction of House Bill 1279 which was piloted through the House by Rep. Rivera.

A similar measure was introduced in the Senate by the Chairman of the Policy and Steering Committee on Commerce and Industry, Senator Mike Bennett of Bradenton.

Governor Charlie Crist signed the bill into law on Tuesday, May 11.

Under this new provision, property owners will not be back-taxed under two conditions:

1. The property owner complied with all necessary permitting requirements when the new building or building improvement was completed
2. Or, the property owner voluntarily discloses the existence of the new building or building improvement to the Property Appraiser before January 1 the property is first assessed

Mr. Garcia has written to Rep. Rivera and Sen. Bennett thanking them for their efforts.

He said the new law would "significantly ameliorate" an unfair tax burden during these difficult economic times. At the same time it would have "little or no impact on the budgets of taxing authorities, as the value of these building improvements will be reflected on current and future tax rolls."

Legislative change like this, he said, will "redound to the benefit of Florida's real estate industry in particular and more broadly to its economic recovery."

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