

IN SUPPORT OF HUGH TAYLOR FOR COUNTY JUDGE

As a taxpayer and one who knows Hugh Taylor, I would like to respond to the letter published by Mr. Jerry Jones in Thursday's paper. Mr. Jones' letter is incorrect in several respects and fails to state a few important facts.

Mr. Jones refers to "false statements" made by Hugh Taylor. The statements to which Mr. Jones objects were true when you consider that the county judge presides over the commissioners court, he is elected to the appraisal district board by the very group he presides over, and he voted for his own appointment. To say that he is not appointing himself to the board is splitting hairs.

The real issue is who should and who should not be appointed by Harrison County to sit on the appraisal district board. Present and past county judges have routinely been appointed to that board by the commissioners court. That policy is just plain wrong, and potentially hurts the citizens of this county. The appraisal district board sets the policies that govern how the appraisal district operates, and those policies, formal and informal, directly affect every property owner in the county. It is common knowledge that our residential property values increased this year, at a time when the local economy is depressed and the national housing market is suffering its worst decline in decades.

When property values are increased by the appraisal district it automatically results in tax increases on property owners with no need to increase the tax rate in order for the county to take in more revenue from the citizens. This works to the benefit of the county judge and commissioners because they don't have to vote for tax rate increases and risk the anger of the taxpayers.

Practically speaking, it is a conflict of interest for the county judge to sit on the appraisal district board. The county judge should not be in a position to participate in setting policies, directly or indirectly, which do or may result in these wrongful back door tax increases. Harrison County's representative on that board should be a property owning citizen who is not also an elected county official.

Hugh Taylor has publicly advocated this and has stated his intention not to allow himself to be appointed to the appraisal district board, but instead to support a policy of appointing tax paying citizens to that board. This conservative idea, along with others such as tax fairness and helping law enforcement in every possible way to better fight crime in Harrison County, are what makes Hugh the best candidate for county judge.

Respectfully,

Barron Neal