



# Saint Louis County

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## NEWS RELEASE

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### **County Board approves 2014 budget**

The St. Louis County Board has given unanimous approval to its 2014 budget in the amount of \$319,550,337. The budget reflects the County's continued commitment to aggressive budget management and sensitivity to the impact of budget decisions on tax payers.

The budget reflects a 1.5 percent increase in the property tax levy. It is the fifth consecutive year the Board has held the levy increase below the rate of inflation. Thanks to new development increasing the tax base, most tax payers will see no change or even a decrease in the county portion of their property taxes when final bills are sent in March.

The levy increase is dedicated to funding debt service related to the renovation of the Government Services Center. There is no increase in the operating levy. All cost increases, including inflation, utilities, salaries and benefits, fuel costs and materials have been absorbed in the budget, offset in part by restored local government aid and a sales tax exemption approved by the state legislature last spring.

A key highlight of the 2014 budget is investment in assessment services. Beginning in 2014, the county will offer assessment services at no charge to cities and townships that choose to contract with the county. By absorbing these costs, the county is saving local units of government an estimated \$2.5 million. Additionally, taxpayers will benefit as the assessment process is made more

uniform and timely, ensuring no one is expected to pay more than their fair share.

Other key investments are in prevention initiatives with the Public Health and Human Services Department. New programs will help ensure the right people get public assistance, while recognizing and treating the underlying causes that drive people to need assistance.

“This budget is a testimony to the thoughtful work of this Board,” said Commissioner Steve Raukar who chairs the finance committee. “This budget speaks to maintaining our infrastructure but doing it in a responsible way. It means stability for addressing unforeseen crisis that may be coming down the pike.”

The County Board approved the 2014 budget during its final meeting of the year, which was held in Morse Township.

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