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Florida's unfunded mandates

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Unfunded mandates affect all Floridians, which is why we believe it's important that they be stopped. A mandate is a program or service that the state or federal government requires local governments to provide, but does not fund. The local community has to spend local tax dollars to pay for the program or service.

The Florida Association of Counties and the Florida League of Cities have proposed a "Local Saving Act" that describes more than a dozen issues that the Legislature could address to reduce the burden on local taxpayers -- without harming the state's budget.

Here's an example of an expensive unfunded mandate. Before 2005, the state funded all juvenile-detention facilities. In 2006, legislators decided to allow the Department of Juvenile Justice to bill counties \$100 million for a share of the costs to provide detention for juvenile offenders awaiting trial. But, counties have no say in how those offenders are housed or treated. The state runs the program and requires counties to pay the bills.

Another crippling mandate is runaway pension costs for police officers and firefighters. These state-mandated "extra" pension benefits have forced cities to spend over \$345 million in tax revenues on new benefits since 1999. We respect and honor police officers and firefighters, but this system of "extra" pension benefits cannot be sustained without significant property tax increases.

Unfunded mandates disrupt the fundamental democratic relationship between citizens and the leaders they elect to protect their communities and quality of life.

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