

Builders tie contributions to impact-fee cap

By [DARA KAM](#)

Palm Beach Post Capital Bureau

Monday, July 02, 2007

TALLAHASSEE — The Florida Home Builders Association threatened on its Web site today to withhold contributions to incumbent legislative candidates who do not sponsor legislation it wants on impact fees.

The group is seeking caps on what it calls "skyrocketing impact fees" by local governments.

FHBA comments

[See the homebuilder](#) association president's message



[Post your comments on this story below](#)

Legislature 2007



NEW Use our [tax calculator](#) to find your home's taxable value through 2023.

[Get the latest](#) news on the session from Tallahassee.

Q: Florida Politics blog



[Inside scoop](#) on the session from *Post* staff

In a president's message, published on the group's Web site, FHBA president John Wiseman said the homebuilder's political action committee decided last week to make contributions to incumbent candidates "only after their name appears as a co-sponsor on impact fee legislation that will be filed for the 2008 session." The group's PAC also is withholding contributions to political parties, leadership funds and other political committees until a task force develops criteria for making such contributions, the message read.

Senate President Ken Pruitt said he was appalled by the message and strongly urged his members not only not to endorse the legislation but also to return any contributions they already have received from the home builders association or associated PACs.

"I'm truly appalled by it. The Senate is not an auction where the highest bidder wins. It just doesn't work that way," said Pruitt, R-Port St. Lucie. "This is not the kind of code of conduct to be tolerated in the Senate." Incumbent Rep. Bill Galvano, who is up for reelection next year and has frequently sponsored bills limiting impact fees in the past, said he, too, was disappointed in Wiseman's message.

"I just don't think someone thought it through when they posted that," said Galvano, R-Bradenton. "It reads as a quid pro quo and that's not right. It's wrong and I don't want a contribution from them regardless of what bill I do if that's how they're going to make contributions." The homebuilders tried, unsuccessfully, to

UPDATED WEEKLY

Browse
Specials
& Deals
From Local
Dealerships

Autos
PalmBeachPost.com

writers.

[Politics forum](#)

South Florida real estate



Take a look at housing in our area, which has become one of the U.S.' most volatile markets.

[Blogs, property listings, more](#)

NEW [Calculate home value](#)



A look at the effects of a [volatile housing market](#) on homeowners and builders.



Post reporters' blog serves up [latest updates and chat](#) on South Florida real estate.



Chat about the [maddening twists](#) of homeowners insurance on our blog.

More Florida news

[Latest state headlines](#)

[P.B. County, TCoast](#)

[news](#)

[Special reports](#)

[Weather](#) | [Traffic](#) |

[Obituaries](#)

get a cap on impact fees included in the property tax reform discussed during the general and special sessions, according to the group's Web site. And it fears that the tax reform that was passed will mean even higher impact fees.

"We know, as a result of property tax reform, that local governments will lose valuable revenue and they will look to new home construction impact fees as a source for making up those lost dollars," Wiseman's message said. "The avalanche of increased fees is already being seen and felt throughout Florida." FHBA spokeswoman Edie Ausley defended the association's position and said the homebuilders want to reduce impact fees because the costs are passed on to home buyers and make affordable housing virtually impossible to construct.

"This is a litmus test. If you support affordable housing and are willing to make that commitment, then we can support you," Ausley said.

Government watchdog advocates say such threats are common behind the scenes, but open comments such as those on the homebuilders' Web site are unusual.

"If these corporations can buy votes just blatantly like that . . . that shows that the system is broken," said Common Cause Florida executive director Ben Wilcox.

~ dara-kam@pbpost.com

Find this article at:

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/politics/content/state/epaper/2007/07/02/0702xgrbuilders.html>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.