

Matthew Natale, Statement on proposed FY '03 tax rate, Page 1  
3401 Martha Custis Drive, Alexandria, Va 22302 (703-578-3674/h)

Honorable Mayor and Members of Council:

For many citizens, paying taxes can be painful. And sometimes those checks to the treasury are quite big, bigger than last years, and require a whole year of planning so a lump sum is available when payment is due.

However, often the pain is soothed by knowledge that our taxes maintain the vital infrastructure of society: schools, quality teachers, public safety, safe roads and lending a helping "hand up" to those most in need.

That's how it should be. We understand that our taxes are an investment in a better and more just Alexandria. We are a compassionate and generous people, who are willing to dig deep to help meet these needs.

In recent years, this compassionate instinct has been called on repeatedly. The City budget has grown 37% in five years, from \$273 million to the proposed \$373 million in FY '03, or an average of about 7.5% a year. I believe it is a reasonable conclusion that this has placed a painful burden on many taxpayers.

I am not alone in that belief. Vice Mayor Cleveland exacted a promise from the Mayor last year which has led to a proposed \$.02 reduction in the FY '03 real estate tax rate.

Vice Mayor Cleveland's move is an important precedent because it establishes the notion that there is a limit as to how fast the budget can grow and therefore how much in taxes a citizen should pay.

Even with this modest \$.02 decrease, the budget contains a proposed tax increase of about \$300 for the average homeowner. Given the steep increases in recent budgets, Council should consider further decreasing this huge increase. Thank you.