



FRANK WHITE, JR.
Jackson County Executive

August 29, 2024

Veto Message from the County Executive

Ordinance 5864

RECEIVED

AUG 29 2024

MARY JO SPINO
COUNTY CLERK

2 pm
MJS

TO THE JACKSON COUNTY LEGISLATURE:

After careful consideration, I am returning **Ordinance 5864** without my approval.

At its core, the role of an assessor is not about winning a popularity contest; it is about ensuring the accurate, fair, and equitable assessment of properties in Jackson County. This crucial function directly impacts the financial wellbeing of every resident and the county's ability to fund essential services. For these reasons, it is imperative that the selection of our County Assessor remains a process rooted in qualifications, experience, and integrity—rather than the whims of a political campaign.

Currently, the County Assessor is appointed by the County Executive in accordance with the Jackson County Charter and relevant ordinances, and this appointment is subject to approval by the County Legislature. This process ensures that the individual selected to serve as County Assessor meets specific qualifications and undergoes a thorough vetting process. It also includes oversight mechanisms that allow for accountability and transparency in how this essential office operates. By moving to an elected position, we risk reducing this vital role to a mere popularity contest, where the candidate with the most name recognition or the best campaign wins, rather than the one most equipped to perform the job with the competence and fairness our residents deserve.

Moreover, the proposed ballot issue would grant the elected assessor unlimited authority to appoint an interim successor in the event they are unable to complete their term. This provision introduces significant risk. For instance, if an assessor were to be charged with misconduct, such as taking bribes, and appointed a successor prior to their removal from office, the county would have no means to remove that appointee, even if they are



complicit or equally unqualified. This scenario could lead to a perpetuation of corruption, eroding public trust and leaving the county vulnerable to further misconduct without recourse.

The current appointment process, established by the County Charter and ordinances, mitigates these risks by requiring rigorous oversight and offering clear avenues for removal if the assessor fails to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct. By maintaining this system, we protect the integrity of the assessor's office and safeguard the interests of all Jackson County residents.

For these reasons, I cannot support Ordinance 5864 as currently proposed. I urge the legislature to consider the potential consequences of moving to an elected assessor position and to uphold the current system that prioritizes qualifications, accountability, and the best interests of our community.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank White, Jr.", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Frank White, Jr.
Jackson County Executive