**Fiscal Facts: Property Tax Trends Vary Widely in Wisconsin**

Homeowners often read about how the property tax on the “median-valued” home in Wisconsin rose less than 1% last year, or declined 2.5% over the past three. Yet, changes in their tax bills do not match news reports.

Property taxes in Wisconsin’s 10 largest cities show how changes are not uniform across the state. Information presented below is limited to residential properties with no new additions or upgrades during 2011-16; that is, home value changes are due strictly to market fluctuation.

During 2011-16 (valuations lag tax levies by one year), the value of the state median home declined 1.3%. The average statewide property tax rate, excluding the lottery and first-dollar credits, fell 0.6%.

Knowing changes in home value and tax rate permit a simple calculation yielding the change in the tax bill. A 1.3% decline in value combined with a 0.6% drop in rate means the tax on that “representative” home declined 1.9% during 2012-17.

However, five-year changes in the 10 largest cities differed widely from the “typical” 1.9% drop in taxes. In Milwaukee, even though the tax rate increased, the average bill fell almost 13% due to a 15% drop in home values. In Madison, both home values and the tax rate rose, resulting in an average tax increase of 8.2%.

Calculations for all communities statewide show tax bill increases of 20% or more in some sparsely-populated towns, and similar declines in others, even though taxes on the median-valued home edged down 1.9%.

*This information is a service of the Wisconsin Policy Forum, the state’s leading resource for nonpartisan state and local government research and civic education.*