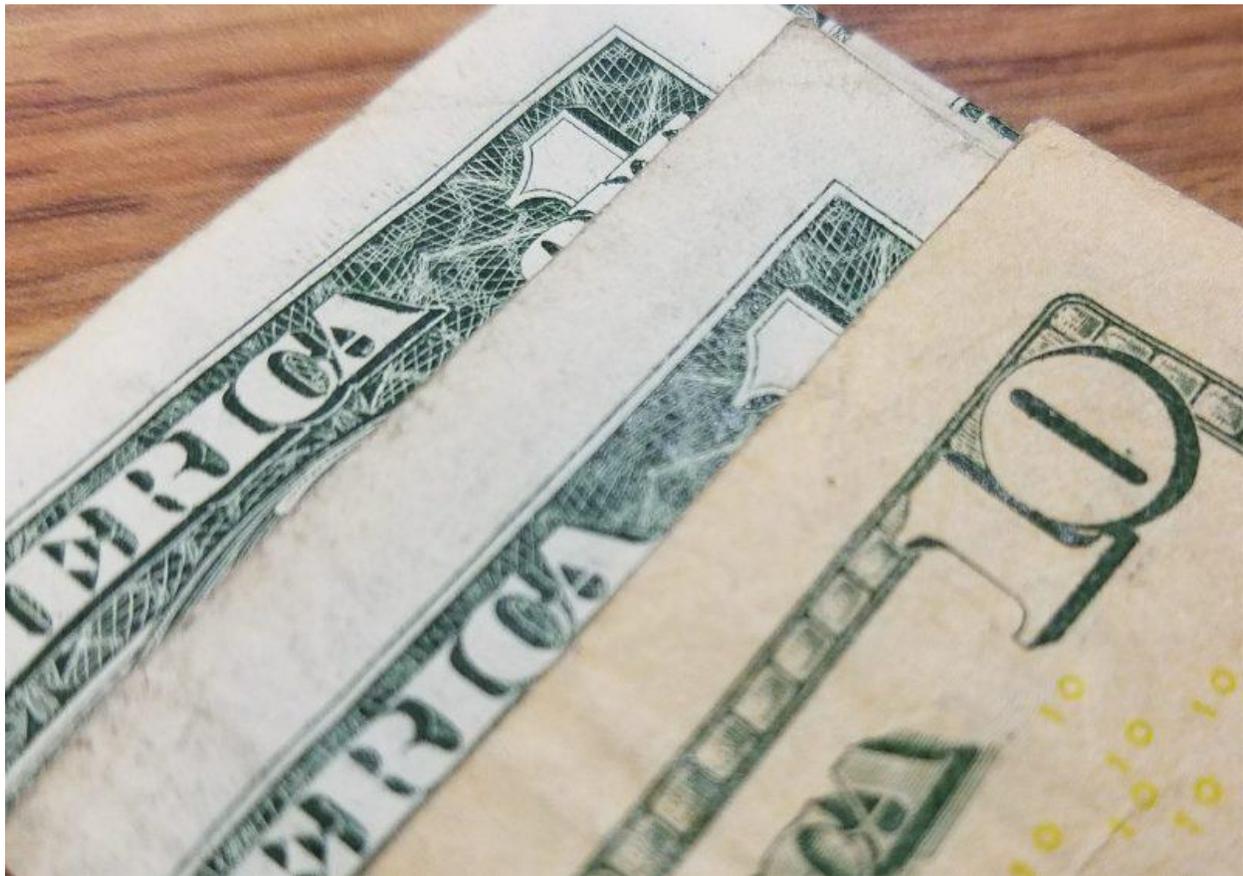




Hillsborough tax collector says Florida rule costs county millions

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A few years ago the state Legislature made county tax collector offices perform some motor vehicle and driver license services. But that means the local offices are losing millions because the fees they charge don't cover the expense. [Hillsborough County Tax Collector Doug Belden](#) wants that fixed.

“The problem is the fact that the state forced us through an [unfunded] mandate to provide driver's license and road testing services; the fee for that has not been changed since 1984. And the small counties in particular cannot deliver that service; they cannot even buy the equipment to deliver that service. In Hillsborough County here, I have been losing \$15 million a year. And

most importantly it's being subsidized by local property taxes, which I don't believe is financially prudent. Nor are my constituents happy about that, to subsidize [an unfunded] state mandate.

“So, I have spoken to Barry Richard, who's a very authoritative source on constitutional law, to possibly write an opinion. And I believe – and I'm not an attorney – that the state has been maybe violating the Florida Constitution as it applies to [unfunded] mandates. So the first step is to get that written opinion. Now, I don't know if I can force [state] General Revenue to pay what it costs to deliver these services. But I believe it's very clear in that Article and Section in the constitution that if I cannot – or tax collector cannot – deliver the service, then we can opt out and give it back to the state. So what I'm doing also is talking to legislators. This is a very serious problem. Again there are becoming more and more deficit counties as a result of these losses.

“And basically [the number of] driver's license in Hillsborough County this year alone has increased by 40,000. I don't think there's any company – private or public sector – that's sustainable when you don't have an increase in any kind of income from 1984 until now, with an increase in expenses. So, I came from the private sector – no one would continue to lose \$15 million and heading north. If this is a subsidiary, for example, they would either sell it or shut it down. Because the CEO – he or she – would not have their job with those kind of losses.”