Oconee County numbers show strong tax base

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SENECA — A recent state survey shows that Oconee County raises much more money per capita strictly from property tax revenues for county government than other similar counties.

The state's Budget and Control Board recently provided The Journal with a chart breaking down county property taxes for fiscal years 2006-2010 for Oconee, Darlington, Greenwood, Laurens, Lancaster and Orangeburg counties. It does not reflect school, city or any other tax revenues. The state is still collecting numbers for FY2011 and FY2012.

Oconee County is the third largest county in this sample with 74,418 in population, behind Orangeburg County at 91,910 and Lancaster County at 77,908 and ahead of Darlington County at 68,299, Greenwood County at 69,835 and Laurens County at 66,528 counties.

The chart shows that when property tax revenues for county operations are divided for every man, woman, child and business, Oconee County often doubles Laurens, Darlington and Greenwood counties and consistently runs well ahead of Lancaster and Orangeburg counties.

Oconee's number exceeded the statewide average by 32 percent more in 2010, down from the previous four years.

Using 2010 as the most recent snapshot, Oconee's per capita receipts dropped to $420, but were still well more than the other counties. Orangeburg was next at $320, followed by Lancaster at $250, Greenwood at $240, Laurens at $160 and Darlington at $155.

TAX: Read more about tax funds Tuesday

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All told, Oconee raised $31.3 million in property tax revenues for county government in 2010, followed by Orangeburg at $29.8 million, Lancaster at $19.5 million, Greenwood at $16.9 million, Laurens at $10.9 million and Darlington at $10.5 million.

Oconee's property tax revenues are consistently much higher than the other counties thanks to Oconee Nuclear Station, which has an assessed property value of $144 million or 27 percent of Oconee County's total assessed valuation. That means one taxpayer covers more than a quarter of the revenues raised for county operations.

Having such a high-dollar property taxpayer as the Oconee Nuclear Station frees Oconee County from assessing other taxes that the counties use to fund their government operations.

Read more about tax funds for government operations in Tuesday's edition.

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