



# Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans

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### **2theadvocate**

#### **Opinion: Our Views: One small N.O. reform**

First the good news: After a difficult political struggle and passage of a constitutional amendment, New Orleans finally has consolidated its seven assessors' offices into one.

While the new single assessor — Erroll Williams — has a mandate for change, the fact is he is one of the seven assessors from the old system, and he has hired two other former assessors to work in his office.

New Orleans' tangle of politics being what it is, this is still a victory.

For years, the city's property tax base was hobbled by wildly varying assessments of property values — meaning that taxes collected could be widely different on similar properties. Politics and favoritism were the underlying principles. That needed to change.

We commend the reform-minded civic leaders in New Orleans, including the **Citizens for 1 Greater New Orleans**, and The Times-Picayune for its long editorial crusade about inequitable assessments and sweetheart deals.

Consolidation of the seven assessors' offices is only the first step. The real changes must come in the first citywide reassessment of property since the ravages of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The 2005 storms caused lawmakers to allow a short-term "freeze" on new, higher assessments for rebuilt property.

The freeze is thawing, and with a mandate for change, we hope Williams will achieve what the Times-Picayune called for in an editorial: "What voters want is for the consolidated assessor office to be operated efficiently and equitably. They want assessments to be based on rational evaluations, not political considerations. They don't want the person across the street with an identical house to have a drastically lower tax bill."

Those are good goals for the "new" assessor. We hope he makes the most of his opportunity to set a high standard for performance in a reborn city.

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