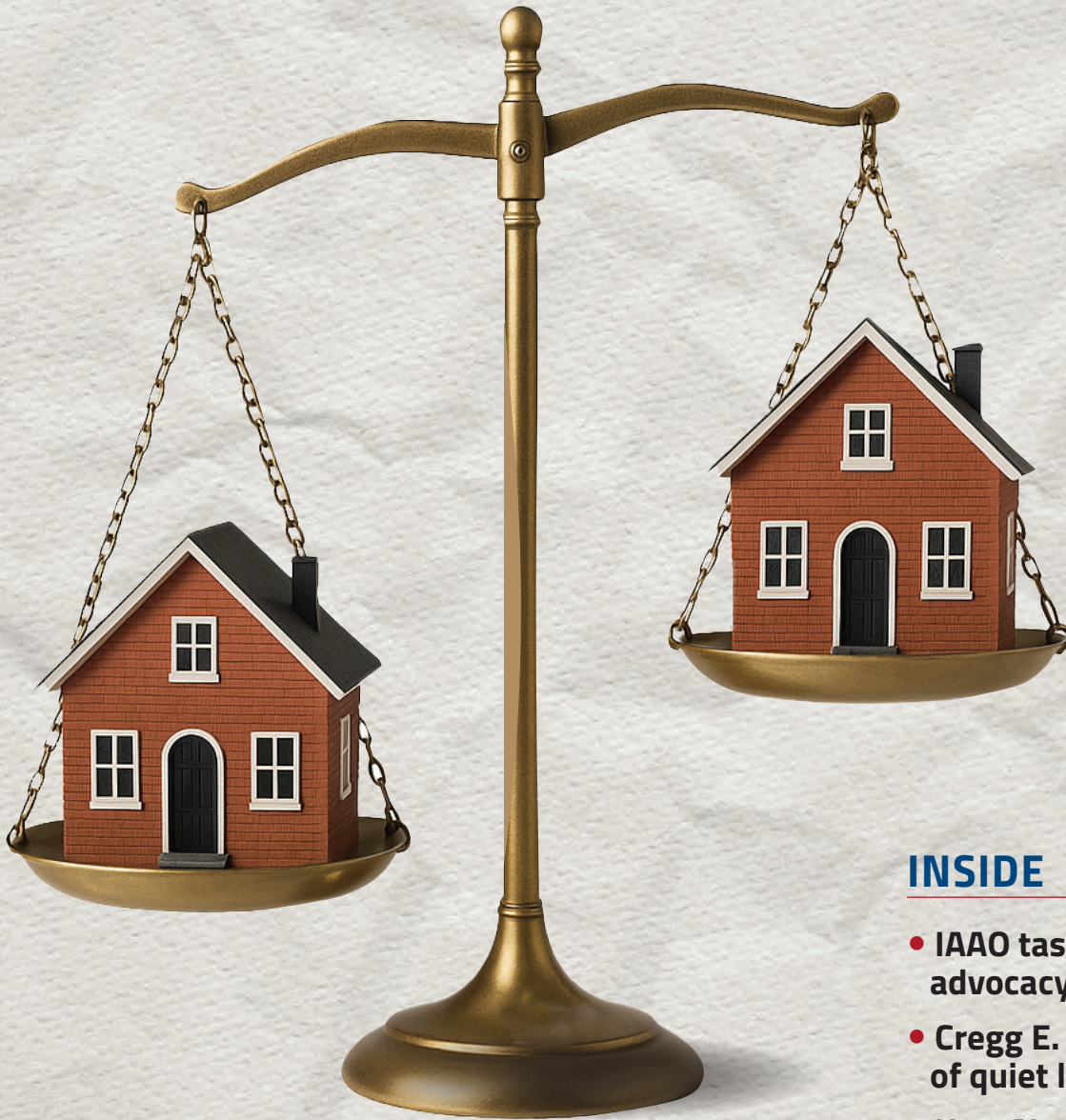


## TAX CAPS CAN CAUSE IMBALANCE



Two town houses — built the same year, in the same condo complex, with identical floor plans, balconies, and equivalent square footage — bear a striking resemblance to each other. Except for their property tax bills.

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In every property appraiser's office there's someone who leads through quiet consistency.



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An \$800 million property tax break meant to protect farmland instead sends millions to Wall Street and foreign investors.



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I know without a doubt the two managers interviewing me knew I knew nothing, but to their eternal credit, they decided to take a chance and offer me a job.

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*Appraiser Cregg E. Dalton, seated at center, and his Citrus County (Florida) Property Appraiser's Office team.*

## Built to last: The legacy of quiet leadership

BY CREGG E. DALTON

**Y**ou don't have to look far to find loud, charismatic, and attention-grabbing leaders in the world.

They're all around us — famous athletes, passionate educators, high-profile musicians, bold politicians, and powerful voices in every industry.

They stand out for their energy, their boldness, and their presence. And while they certainly have their place, I've been thinking lately about a different kind of leader ... the kind we don't always see, but whom we always feel.

This month, I felt called to focus on the quiet leaders, the ones in our offices, our departments, and

across our industry who don't seek the spotlight but somehow light the way.

They may not have the loudest voice in the room, but they're the ones people rely on when it matters. They guide with humility, lift others up, and build the kind of culture that endures long after their work is done.

This is a tribute to those individuals, the ones who remind us that leadership isn't always about being seen or heard. Sometimes, it's about showing up, doing the right thing, and quietly changing the world around you, one meaningful moment at a time.

Recently, our office had the absolute pleasure of celebrating one of our true legends — Darren

Pillsbury. Darren, one of our assistant property appraisers, just hit an incredible milestone: 30 years of rock-solid, unwavering service to the Citrus County Property Appraiser's Office and the amazing residents of Citrus County, Florida.

When I think about Darren's journey, I can't help but reflect on another remarkable figure in our history, our former elected Property Appraiser Les Cook. With more than 40 years of service (yes, four decades!), Les didn't leave just a mark. He left a legacy.

Together, these two gentlemen have shown us all what it really means to lead: not with noise, but with purpose, heart, and consistency.

Let's be real. In a world full of



loud voices and big personalities, Darren and Les are the rare kind of leaders who remind us that strength isn't always seen, but it's definitely felt.

Like the wiring or the beams in your house, you might not notice their work every day, but trust me, everything would fall apart without them.

You also will never see the thousands of decisions they've made behind the scenes or the quiet moments where they carried the weight so others didn't have to.

But what you do see is the stability they created, the trust they earned, and the integrity that runs deep through our organization.

I often refer to Darren as the "Yoda" of our organization — a quiet force of wisdom and calm who always seems to have the answer when you need it most.

He's one of the individuals I turn to when I need clarity, guidance, or just a thoughtful perspective.

Similarly, over the years, I've often caught myself asking, "What would Les do in this situation?"

That inner compass — grounded in faith, integrity, humility, and service — always points true north

with men like Darren and Les.

With both Darren and Les, you never have to wonder where their hearts are. Every decision they make, every ounce of energy they give, is rooted in one thing: service. To this office. To their families. To the people of Citrus County.

They don't just talk about integrity, they live it. Their leadership is not performative. It's purposeful. It's not loud, but it's lasting.

They show us what it means to lead with quiet conviction — no fanfare, no spotlight — just a deep, unwavering commitment to doing what's right.

This kind of leadership doesn't make the front page, it builds the foundation. It builds trust. It builds people. It builds legacies.

And that is the kind of leadership I aspire to. The kind that earns respect through action, lifts others through encouragement, and inspires a standard worth following.

These two incredible men represent something even bigger than themselves.

They reflect the spirit of our entire team — the everyday heroes of the Citrus County Property Appraiser's Office, past and pres-

ent — who lead with integrity, serve with purpose, and care deeply about the people around them. Their legacy isn't just written in job titles or accolades. It's written in the culture we've built together, in the commitment we share, and in the future leaders they've inspired along the way.

Each year, we gather for a family photo as a team. Not just for tradition's sake, but because it truly means something to us.

That photo stands for unity. It stands for trust. It stands for the idea that we're not just co-workers, we're family.

That image hangs proudly in our lobbies, on our website, and on the wall of my office, right next to a photo of my own family. Because this team is my family.

They say the average person makes about 35,000 decisions a day.

I can tell you, when you're a leader that number feels even higher. And each choice carries weight. It affects the people we work with, the families they go home to, and the thousands of residents who count on us.

That's why I often look at those family photos. They remind me of the standard that's been set, the

## The Virtual Assessor: How AI and Aerial Imagery Are Shaping the Future of Property Valuation



Wednesday, July 30  
Noon Central Time

Assessors face rising demands to modernize, reduce fieldwork, and defend assessments amid limited resources and data challenges. Fortunately, tools like AI and high-resolution imagery support remote detection of property changes, enabling a fairer, more efficient approach. Together, they're shaping a powerful new model: the virtual assessor.

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example Darren and Les have lived.

They've taught me that leadership is about doing what's right, not what's easy.

It's about service over self. People over ego. Purpose over praise.

When young people ask me why I joined the military, or why I went into law enforcement, or why I chose to step into public office, my answer has never changed: I wanted to serve. I wanted to help.

And I believe, with all my heart, that if you asked the incredible team I'm blessed to work with each day, they'd say the same thing.

Because that same pride I felt in a military or law enforcement uniform, I feel every time I walk through the doors of this office.

That same sense of mission I carried into every call as a deputy — I see it reflected in the quiet leadership of Darren and Les.

They've reminded me that public service, when done right, is one of

the greatest callings a person can have.

In a world that often celebrates the loudest voices and the flashiest titles, let us not forget the quiet giants — those who lead with humility, who show up when it matters most, and who leave behind a legacy not built on applause, but on impact. Let us strive to lead like they do — with courage, compassion, and character.

As we celebrate Darren's 30 years of excellence, we honor something even greater: the kind of leadership that transforms organizations from the inside out, the kind that inspires trust, builds people up, and leaves a legacy that time cannot erase.

Thank you, Darren.

Thank you, Les.

Your names may not always be in headlines, but your legacy will always be in our hearts.

You are the blueprint for the kind

of leadership that lasts, and we're all better for having walked this journey with you.

I truly hope this is the kind of leadership guiding your organization. I hope you're surrounded by mentors who lead with humility, who serve with purpose, and who build meaningful relationships rooted in trust and respect.

Because when leadership looks like this — genuine, grounded, and servant-hearted — everyone benefits. You grow stronger. Your team grows stronger. Their families feel the difference.

And ultimately, the communities you serve thrive because of it.



**GREGG E. DALTON** is Citrus County Property Appraiser in Inverness, Florida.

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