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THE PROPERTY TAX, A MAINSTAY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, is the subject of continual controversy, with numerous ballot measures to place caps on it—or in some cases proposals to eliminate it completely. But, in fact, it is a fair, democratic, stable, and efficient source of local revenue, argues attorney and property tax expert Joan Youngman in A Good Tax: Legal and Policy Issues for the Property Tax in the United States, published this month by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.

The property tax generates some $472 billion per year in local revenue in the United States, making it a critical source of funding for schools, police and fire protection, and other public services. It is also a highly transparent tax, holding local governments accountable to citizens, who can see clearly how their tax dollars are spent.

However, a series of populist revolts, beginning with California’s Proposition 13 in 1978, have weakened the property tax and led to unintended consequences.

“Ironically, many property tax limitations enacted in the name of fairness have actually distorted the tax base and introduced inequities,” Youngman says. “I hope this book will serve as a road map for a new path forward, helping policy makers strengthen the property tax as a fair, stable, and efficient source of local revenue and autonomy.”

Through a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the legislative and administrative issues facing policy makers, Youngman outlines ways in which state and local governments can provide taxpayer relief, when necessary, while preserving crucial provisions of the property tax, such as the accurate assessment of every property based on the fair market value.

“At a time when many governments are facing fiscal difficulties and the need to address delayed or deferred financial obligations of all types, an effective property tax can be a valuable instrument for the common good,” Youngman writes.

Joan Youngman is a senior fellow and chair of the Department of Valuation and Taxation at the Lincoln Institute. She is an attorney and author of Legal Issues in Property Valuation and Taxation: Cases and Materials (2006).

“At a time when many governments are facing fiscal difficulties and the need to address delayed or deferred financial obligations of all types, an effective property tax can be a valuable instrument for the common good.”
In A Good Tax, Joan Youngman defends the property tax, pointing out that it "is a mainstay of independent local government revenue . . . supplies nearly half of all general revenue from local sources . . . almost all school district tax revenue" and is a more powerful revenue instrument than the federal income tax, collecting $472 billion versus $297 billion between 2005 and 2015. In Youngman’s view, a good property tax should be stable, efficient, and fair. It should be transparent so that taxpayers can evaluate the cost of local public services and hold public officials accountable. Its assessment should be based on market value in order to fairly and accurately distribute its burden. A tax imposed on a legal product or service that may be addictive in nature is known as a(n): Sin Tax. Steve and Sally have income from all sources (taxable and nontaxable) totaling $140,286. The federal individual income tax system in the United States uses a(n) _tax structure. Progressive. The tax base for sales tax is the _ of goods and certain services provided. Retail Sales Price. The term _equity means that two taxpayers in similar situations pay the same tax. Horizontal. If she owed any tax for the year. Who has the ultimate authority to interpret the IRC and settle tax disputes? The Judicial System. Property tax, levy that is imposed primarily upon land and buildings. In some countries, including the United States, the tax is also imposed on business and farm equipment and inventories. Sometimes the tax extends to automobiles, jewelry, and furniture and even to such intangibles as bonds. The scope of the tax in different countries varies greatly, depending upon legal factors, administrative realities, tradition, availability of other sources of revenue, the organization of government (especially at the level of local government, where the income from this levy may be of key significance), and the public services provided.