



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 24, 2019

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Government Justice Center Sues to Expose Nassau's Assessment Secrets

The Government Justice Center (GJC), a non-partisan legal center founded in 2017 to protect taxpayers from improper government action, today filed a case against Nassau County to make the County reveal how residential home values were calculated as part of the recent countywide reassessment process.

GJC represents Dennis Duffy, who initially requested this information on January 3, 2019 after he received assessment documents lacking vital information regarding how the County calculated his assessed value. The County claimed the formula, or algorithm, used to calculate the value was exempt from disclosure and Mr. Duffy appealed.

The County denied his appeal, claiming the algorithm was protected from disclosure as a trade secret, and that disclosure could hurt the vendor's competitive position.

"People are being told their property taxes are going up by thousands of dollars, and they're not being told why," said GJC Executive Director Cameron Macdonald. "That's wrong."

Nassau County has failed to uphold its obligation to disclose public records and has disregarded the importance of transparency in government. Nassau County home owners deserve to know the process or set of rules followed by a computer in calculating their property values.

"How can anyone tell if the computer is doing it right if they don't know what the computer is supposed to be doing in the first place?" asks Mr. Duffy. "I am not asking how the software does its calculations or for a copy of the computer code. I am asking Nassau County to explain how it determined my assessment so I can make an informed decision whether I agree and whether I should spend time and money filing a grievance."

The lawsuit follows a string of wins in which the GJC succeeded in making state and local government agencies comply with citizens' Freedom of Information Law requests. The GJC has also moved to stop the collection of more than \$70 million a year in [illegal fees](#) by Suffolk County.

The Government Justice Center, based in Albany, is an independent, not-for-profit legal center that provides pro-bono representation and legal services to protect the rights of New Yorkers in the face of improper action by state or local governments. Taxpayers can request the GJC's assistance [here](#).