



09 January 2009

Dear Friends,

Happy New Year to all!

Today's update will not have a great deal of information; we're in a holding pattern because of the new session of the General Assembly but I'll tell you as much as we know right now.

The 2009-2010 session of the Pennsylvania Senate will convene on January 20 and the House of Representatives will convene on January 26.

We know that the School Property Tax Elimination Act (SPTEA) will be re-introduced in the House early in this session, although we do not yet have a date. Because all pending legislation expired with the close of the last legislative session on November 30, the re-introduced SPTEA may have a bill number other than the HB 1275 used in the 2007-2008 session. I'll send more details immediately when they become available.

We also know that Senator Mike Folmer (R-48) will be introducing a similar or possibly identical bill in the Senate, something that has never occurred before. This is terrific news, since it will give us the opportunity to work for property tax elimination in both houses of the General Assembly.

The Pennsylvania Coalition of Taxpayer Associations (PCTA), our statewide umbrella group, has begun planning based on current information and I'll share our plans in a future update after they've been firmed up a bit.

Property taxes look like a hot issue for this session and it appears that a number of competing bills may also be introduced. It's a certainty that many of them will be more of the same fake "relief" like last session's HB 1600 and we're going to have to be very discriminating when deciding what to support. Our only sure winner right now is the SPTEA.

In the meantime, we can get an early start with the new legislature.

The Democrats retained control of the House with a 104-99 majority, so they will control the flow of legislation this session. We can begin 2009 by respectfully requesting that the new House majority leadership team make school property tax elimination a priority.

In a recent commentary in the Wilkes-Barre *Times-Leader*, Luzerne County Representative Todd Eachus, the new majority leader, said: "The state House of Representatives is under new management and has new priorities, and the people of Pennsylvania will determine those priorities."

We'll assume that Representative Eachus is being sincere, so it's important that everyone please write or call him and new House Speaker Keith McCall to let them know our foremost priority: The complete ELIMINATION of school property taxes! The contact information to make this request to these leaders is below.

For those of you in Northeast Pennsylvania, it's especially important for you to make your voices heard since these two lawmakers are from your area and are sensitive to your demands. Because of the hard work of CAPTaxes, the PCTA taxpayer advocacy group in Luzerne County, combined with the large number of homeowners in the Northeast supporting elimination due to the recent botched Luzerne County reassessment, we have a unique opportunity for folks in your area to make a big difference.

Good people have suffered for far too long while some of our lawmakers waste time playing shallow, self-serving political games. It is time for those who have opposed elimination to disavow the special interests, reject the petty politics, and do what is right for the people of Pennsylvania. Nothing less than TOTAL ELIMINATION is acceptable and no excuses can be tolerated.

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Because of the current economic situation the property tax issue has become even more critical. Foreclosures and tax sales have greatly increased and more folks than ever are losing their homes.

On January 4th, the Sunday *Reading Eagle* contained a pull-out section listing properties in Berks County that will be sold at sheriff's sale this month. The supplement was similar in appearance to a supermarket flyer; it had a full color graphic at the top, a picture of the sheriff and a sheriff's badge, a few pictures of attractive homes, and four nine-column pages of homes that will be auctioned. How many of these homes could have been saved if school property taxes and the resulting monthly escrow payments were eliminated?

I was particularly outraged by this piece because it was presented in such a blatantly commercial manner even though each listing represents the devastation of a family's life. Does this indicate how callous the government has become about seizing our homes and destroying our dreams?

We have gone well beyond the problem of exorbitant and unfair property taxes to a more basic violation of our Constitutional rights: The right to be secure in one's property. The right to possess and use one's own private property was recognized by the framers of our Constitution and in our founding government documents as one of the foremost of our inalienable, inviolable, rights.

John Adams declared: "Property must be secured or liberty cannot exist." James Madison said: "Government is instituted to protect property... This being the end of government, that alone is a just government which impartially secures to every man whatever is his own."

Despite the intent of our founding fathers to guarantee that we are to be secure in our property, our government can simply confiscate our homes at will to satisfy a subjective and inequitable tax. This must end! Property taxes must be eliminated NOW and the sacrosanct right to be secure in our property restored.

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Just one more note: Thanks to the efforts of all of you we have built tremendous momentum over the past few years but we need to continue to build if we are to reach our goal. Please ask your family, friends, neighbors - everyone you know - to join in this cause by visiting the PTCC website at [www.ptcc.us](http://www.ptcc.us) to learn about the SPTEA and to subscribe to the PTCC e-mail updates. In a grassroots effort such as ours, every voice counts!

Please accept my sincere gratitude to all of you for your ongoing help and support - it is greatly appreciated. NOW LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO GET THIS DONE!

Please write to me at [pataxpayers@gmail.com](mailto:pataxpayers@gmail.com) with questions or comments.

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