

## **The Real Faces of the Issue**

24 March 2008

Dear Friends,

I recently came across a quote from former Virginia Governor Mark Warner that truly describes the political situation in Harrisburg: *"Politics is the only business where doing nothing other than making the other guy look bad is an acceptable outcome."*

Governor Warner's statement accurately describes the reason why the school property tax elimination issue continues in limbo in Harrisburg: self-serving political gamesmanship that ignores the needs of the people in favor of political gain. But if you're willing to participate, today's Action Item can be a great help in moving the property tax issue past the games and into the forefront of the Harrisburg agenda.

There have been recent announcements from the Pennsylvania House of Representatives where lawmakers tout their agenda for healthcare reform, energy reform, and leasing the turnpike - all designed to grab headlines before the elections. But NOTHING is being said about property tax reform because NOTHING is being done about what is probably the most urgent issue facing Pennsylvanians today.

It's my opinion that many lawmakers tend to view these issues in the abstract, seeing them simply as pawns to be played on the chessboard of Harrisburg election year politics rather than considering how these problems affect the lives of the people that they supposedly represent.

It's time to show the lawmakers the REAL faces of the property tax issue to let them know how their political games affect the lives of REAL people!

### **\*\* ACTION ITEM \*\***

The PTCC and PCTA are collecting real-life stories of folks who are in distress from relentlessly increasing school property taxes. These stories will be compiled into one document to be presented to legislative leaders and the governor as examples of how their procrastination on this issue is destroying the lives of Pennsylvania homeowners - both working families and retirees.

During the next few days PLEASE send a paragraph or two to the PTCC that tells how out-of-control school property taxes are affecting your and your family's quality of life. You may sign the letter if you choose or submit it anonymously, but please at least indicate your county of residence. If you have neighbors or friends who are experiencing financial difficulties because of the property tax problem, please have them send their stories as well. Send your letters to [pataxpayers@gmail.com](mailto:pataxpayers@gmail.com); the compilation as submitted to the lawmakers will be posted on the PTCC website when it's completed.

Here's just one example:

Last week I received a call from a 71 year old widow who was forced to raid her tax savings fund to pay for fuel oil and now has no way to pay her property taxes. She keeps her thermostat at 56 degrees, basically lives in one room with a space heater, and has gone back to work cleaning houses so she can afford to buy food. This woman lives in a very modest house in a school district where last year the district was granted an exception to the Act 1 index and raised property taxes by 8.6%; they were granted an exception again this year and will increase taxes 6.7%. That's more than 15% in two years. This woman is despondent from the fear of losing her home and having no place to live.

Stories like this one are UNACCEPTABLE! These politicians MUST be shown that their inaction is jeopardizing the welfare and the lives of many thousands of Pennsylvanians; they MUST understand that what they are doing (or not doing) is destroying the future for good, honest people who only want to live their lives without the fear of financial ruin. Significant pressures above any that have ever been seen are affecting folks and this effort will help to get the information necessary to quantify this issue.

Finally, if you want further proof of the terrible tax situation in Pennsylvania, please read this article from Kiplinger's Magazine that outlines the best and worst states for total tax burden on retirees. Guess which state is rated the worst?  
<http://moneycentral.msn.com/content/RetirementandWills/P45875.asp>

You can help to end this deplorable situation by responding to today's Action Item – please take a few minutes to do so and feel free to also post your comments on the PTCC Blog site at <http://pataxpayers.blogspot.com/2008/03/action-item-real-faces-of-issue.html>.

The taxpayers of Pennsylvania can no longer be ignored!

In closing, I want to thank all of you for your continuing support of our efforts to achieve honest, equitable school finance reform. Please work to enlist the help of your family, friends, and neighbors in this campaign so we can have an even larger base of support for the benefit of all Pennsylvania taxpayers and schoolchildren. Please forward this e-mail to as many folks as possible! The more hands, the better!

Your questions and concerns are always welcome – please write to me at [pataxpayers@gmail.com](mailto:pataxpayers@gmail.com).

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