



Campaign Issues Update

The Latest on the Commercial Assessment Bill and MTA Bailout

Commercial Assessment Ratio Bill

As embarrassing and frustrating as it was, the deadlock for the control of the NY State Senate enabled us to learn about this legislation and mobilize to prevent it. Thanks to the tremendous teamwork between those of us working to educate the public and the hundreds of condo and co-op owners pitching in, we were able to force the legislators proposing this bill to pull it back... at least for now. Make no mistake about it; there is a plan to bring it back in the near future under a different guise and probably as secretly as before. We will be watching.

My opponent in this election for County Legislator publicly joined with a few local officials recently to express their call to return power to the democratic majority in the State Senate. My opponent and his running mate, Peekskill Mayor Foster, were upset that the "inaction in Albany has stalled the proposed commercial assessment ratio changes," and that this was "affecting our assessment rolls" (NCN 7/1/09). So, when some people running for office tell you that they were against this bill don't believe a word of it. They will tell you to your face what you want to hear but their inaction to prevent the legislation speaks volumes.

Recently, I was able to collect the various petitions that were distributed to the various condo and co-op locations around Northern Westchester and will present them to our State Senator Leibell. He assured me our grassroots effort made the difference and he would use the petitions to hopefully prevent this type of legislation in the future.

I want to express my thanks to all who helped me in this effort and I assure you that I will continue to be vigilant on preventing this type of legislation in the future.

MTA Bailout

Unfortunately, we are about to feel the effects of the most dramatic and outrageous example of how unchecked partisan politics impacts the lives of ordinary citizens. Westchester County is already labeled as the highest taxed county in the country, and the recent approval by the NY State Legislature to bailout the Metropolitan Transit Authority drives that point home with disastrous consequences. This is the type of hasty, questionable and unfair lawmaking that results when politicians of a single party control all levels of government. The financial hit to the working families of the county that may well be the fatal blow to their economic futures. When I initially spoke against this action back in May ([Testa Voices Opposition to MTA Bailout](#)) I spoke of not only the massive payroll tax this bailout put in place but the many additional surcharges and increased fees that will negatively affect the commuting residents of Northern Westchester. As I have gone around the district during this campaign I have heard the effects the bailout has imposed on not only commuters but the many who like to visit NY City from time to time.

These added fees are making it harder on everyone to plan trips to visit museums, see shows or just sight see. Simply put: The taxpayers of Westchester can't take any more!

Is it a coincidence that Rockland, Putnam and Dutchess Counties, without one party in absolute control of either the legislature or the county executive's office, are discussing ways to withdraw from the MTA? In Westchester alone, the payroll tax will cost municipalities and school districts at least \$13.6 million and the County itself an additional \$1.6 million. That's not counting the \$130 million Westchester residents already pay the MTA annually from sales, mortgage taxes and a direct subsidy from the county budget!

The many residents of Northern Westchester who commute via mass transit for work will pay higher fares and join the rest of us in being forced to pay a new MTA payroll tax, retroactively. All for the privilege of living in what is already the county with the highest taxes in America!

So, when you hear my opponent talk about the benefits of being part of the "super-majority" in the Westchester County Legislature, remember to ask him; "Who benefits?" These days, it's a question every Westchester taxpayer can't afford not to ask.