

The Committee to Elect Tom Schiliro

P.O. Box 565, Rocky Point, NY 11778 (631) 488-0809 Schiliro.Assembly@gmail.com
www.TomSchiliroForAssembly.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: July 14, 2014

Contact: Rebecca Breitel

Phone: (631) 488-0809

Email: Schiliro.Assembly@gmail.com

PROPERTY TAXES AND THE NEED FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF

ROCKY POINT - The property tax is the most regressive tax ever imposed upon our citizens. It is not based on income, ability to pay, or any other fair and equitable system. It is based on the common necessity of home ownership; a basic right to the American dream. The tax is imposed by arbitrary standards such as assessments, location, and equalization rates that quite frankly make no sense, and home values.

Every election year, those who run for office often use the property tax as a means to gain votes. Often at the expense of any meaningful debate they use the issue to declare loud and clear that this tax is "too high" and we need to lower it. Of course the cry dies out once the elections are over and it is brought up again in the next election cycle. When does this demagoguery stop and meaningful discussion begin?

That is not to say that some meaningful reform has not taken place. New York's Star program is a step in the right direction. Here, New York home owners can get rebates on the exorbitant property levies they now pay. The 2% tax cap for local governments keeps these municipalities living within their means. This can cause town and county governments along with school districts to find ways to save money and not rely totally on the taxpayer. Combining purchasing, transportation costs and consolidation can achieve these means.

We need to do more, much more. On a recent walking tour of the 2nd Assembly District, I came across a homeowner in Rocky Point who was paying a whopping \$24,000 a year in property taxes. Needless to say, his beloved home that he obviously took great pride in, was up for sale. His story is repeated throughout the district where the high property tax bill is confiscatory, which essentially means the home becomes unsaleable and therefore his equity cannot be tapped.

We can vigorously support new reforms that provide real property tax relief. Let's expand the Star program on a graduated scale subject to the homeowner(s) income. The current \$500,000 threshold should be lowered to \$250,000 as the top scale with higher rebates given to lower earners, particularly those earning less than \$100,000, a livable wage here in Suffolk County for a family of four. Tying the property tax to strict income levels will make this tax based on ability to pay a much fairer and equitable system. The homeowner in Rocky Point who pays \$24,000 a year will not pay that if his income was \$75,000 a year. Additionally State Budget surpluses must be earmarked to help our local school districts in maintaining academic excellence. This reduces the local property tax burden and maintains

quality education, a key reason that keeps the value of homes high. Good schools equal a sound property investment in that district.

Critics of this proposal will say that government cannot lower taxes without drastic cuts in services. In fact this proposal as suggested would expand the tax base and government revenues will actually increase. Lower taxes for property attracts business which means more jobs and more taxpayers. The real estate market would prosper greatly with more revenue coming from mortgage tax filings to town governments, a large source of revenue for these local budgets. Young families, a key component to our local economy, will be able to afford home ownership and contribute greatly to the new expanded tax base.

We need to begin to address the Property Tax problem with hard hitting reforms and not just deal with it as a yearly political issue that is forgotten after the votes are cast in November. If we can effectively get a handle on this regressive tax burden then all who seek office and support these reforms will have done their job.

#