

# NEWS RELEASE

## State Senator Jane Clare Orie

La Casa Blanca Building, 9400 McKnight Road, Suite 105, Pittsburgh, PA 15237 • (412) 630-9466 • FAX (412) 635-2199  
2525 Rochester Road, Suite 207, Cranberry Township, PA 16066 • (724) 776-3500 • FAX (724) 776-3582  
Senate Box 203040, Harrisburg, PA 17120-3040 • (717) 787-6538 • FAX (717) 787-8625  
Email: jorie@pasen.gov • Website: <http://orie.pasenategop.com>



### **OP-ED: Act 1 Rejection Shows Need for New Approach to Eliminate Property Taxes** By Senators Jane Orie (R-Allegheny/Butler) and Jeffrey Piccola (R-Dauphin/York)

As the only two members of the Senate who from the very beginning opposed Act 1 of 2006, we laud the people of Pennsylvania for joining us in overwhelmingly rejecting the local tax referendum on May 15<sup>th</sup>. With this vote, taxpayers have sent a clear mandate: A tax shift that only promises possible relief is not the answer to our property tax woes. Our response: School property taxes must be eliminated.

Pennsylvania has long lacked the necessary executive leadership and legislative political will to offer a comprehensive approach to solving what has become an out-of-control school property tax system. Past attempts have at best offered band-aids when a complete overhaul was needed. This track record of missed opportunities and failure to tackle the problem has compounded the situation to the point where we can no longer nibble around the edges. Knowing the voters have definitively spoken empowers us to once again put forth the only comprehensive solution.

Rather than continue down the failed path of minor tax shifts and empty promises of accountability, it is evident that this Commonwealth needs to explore proposals that totally eliminate school property taxes. We should not be relying on a 19<sup>th</sup> century tax to fund a 21<sup>st</sup> century public education. A student's zip code should not determine the quality of a child's education.

Property taxes are among the most regressive taxes imposed by our government, and they are assessed regardless of the owner's ability to pay. Our assessment system itself is arbitrary and subjective and creates funding inequities between school districts as a result. These funding inequities are present among property owners and families with children, without children, and even renters. The costs of education continue to escalate and taxpayers are unable to keep up with these costs. As a result, some people are being forced out of their homes due to continually increasing school property taxes.

A shift in funding public schools primarily to the state would provide the ultimate property tax "relief," which is the elimination of school property taxes. Furthermore, this shift would create an incentive for the state to reduce the unfunded mandates that it places on our public school system. Such a shift would also place heightened pressure on the General Assembly to control education spending. Under the current system there is too great a temptation to pass new state programs that must be funded, at least in part, by local taxpayers. Elimination of school property taxes is vitally important, but in addition to that, we must go further and constrain spending.

The time has come to establish a roadmap for the elimination of the local school property tax. There's no need for further study or polling information. The public demands its elected officials work together to solve the problem, and the time is now. A wide range of options already exists and is available for action.

We are committed to ensuring all Pennsylvanians have the kind of relief that is necessary and that the Commonwealth is moving in the right direction to ultimately eliminate – not simply reduce – school property taxes. The people have spoken – and we're listening.