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Rebate isn't how I spell tax relief

Home News Tribune Online 07/23/07

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Property-tax reform should be Trenton's top priority, but it won't happen until after the November elections. By then, legislators may not have to deal with it.

Thanks to five consecutive years of mismanagement, \$6 billion in new state taxes, \$10 billion in increased spending and \$37.5 billion in new debt, New Jersey is now unaffordable for many poor and middle-income families. New Jersey homeowners' property-tax bills have risen on average 35 percent over the past five years.

The raising of the sales tax to 7 percent is not going to bring down the state deficit; in actuality, it will raise it. Less disposable income means less money going into an already strained economy.

Let's not kid ourselves and jump for joy when we receive those rebate checks this year. This year's rebate checks are being paid for by last year's 1 cent (17 percent) sales tax increase. In essence you're getting back your money already paid to the state in sales tax.

Without some major budget cuts, or in the absence of a new tax-funding formula, taxes will be increased again next year. This year's rebate, ladies and gentlemen, is a one-time deal; we will not have a repeat performance.

The selling of the New Jersey Turnpike (monetization — turning government debt into money — a fancy word for privatization) is a short-term solution to an ongoing problem. If the reasons we got to this point are not alleviated, our legislators have done nothing for the taxpayers of New Jersey.

To sustain and keep this sleight of hand in play, taxes will have to be increased again the following year. We need to rid ourselves of government waste, frivolous spending, fiscal abuses and dual officeholding. Those are the tough choices; the easy choice is to raise taxes.

In November, by voting yes to use the sales-tax increase toward property-tax relief, you will be putting an end to the issue of property-tax reform. Trenton is counting on us to vote yes. There is no concrete plan in place as to how the money collected will be allocated. The best way would be to have a plan in place first, so we would know how the money would be disbursed; then ask us to vote yes. We are being asked to give our money for something we can't see. Without a plan as to how this money will be dedicated, who will get the relief and what areas will receive it?

Our current tax plan is just not working; it needs to be reworked from the ground up. There is no easy solution, but to ask taxpayers to vote yes to put the balance of the sales-tax increase toward tax relief is again the easy way out. It will buy our legislators at least another 10 years in office, and they won't have to deal with it. New Jersey needs true property-tax reform, not using one tax to pay for another. The taxpayers need a guarantee that any funds collected toward property-tax relief will not be used to plug another hole somewhere else in the budget.

Without a guarantee, the people of New Jersey will be asked again to dig deeper in the very near future.

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