

Tim Seip
Remarks before the House Local Government Committee
March 10, 2010

Chairman Freeman, Chairman Creighton, I welcome the opportunity to again present my legislation relating to spot appeals of property tax assessments to the house local government committee.

I have been extremely focused on this facet of the property tax law in Pennsylvania. As I am certain, absent some members that were not serving on the Local Government Committee last term, everyone is aware of the lengths that the General Assembly went to last term to make this situation better.

Since last term's vetoes, the previous spot appeal legislation has been reintroduced. However at this time I believe that this package of legislation that I have worked on with Rep Denglinger and Rep Gergely, as well as the Governor's office and members of the Senate, offers a real compromise that improves the appeal system for everyone.

Last summer I made it a point to appear before public school districts in my legislative district to present them with information that I had learned about the property tax appeal process.

Following my presentations, one school district- Pine Grove Area- armed with this new information, decided to discontinue the practice.

During my presentations it became clear to me that many members of the school boards were not aware of exactly how the spot appeal practice was initiated and the facts of individual instances that they had authorized appeals to be initiated clearly by default. I believe that by establishing procedural steps, much confusion can be averted. This legislation would allow property owners to provide information to the school board and also allow board members to ask any clarifying questions about the property before an appeal would proceed. The current process does not allow for such a dialog.

Often the property owners are confused about the process and have questions for school board members.

Unfortunately, the first point of contact for the property owners is almost always the county board of appeals. Additionally, school board members are typically not present at county appeal board hearings. This leaves many unanswered questions and places the assessment appeals board in the awkward position of trying to answer questions of property owners that would better be answered by school board members.

I have met with my house colleagues, the governor's office and senate members and I'm confident that we do have a wonderful bipartisan package of compromise legislation.

This package of bills will in **NO WAY PROHIBIT** an appeal from being made by the school district. But it will provide transparency in government, by placing procedural steps in place to make the appeal process fair for everyone.