

Talking Points:

- NYS PTA recognizes that NY's property tax payers are heavily overburdened.
- Rising property taxes are not due to school district overspending. Rising taxes are due to growing state and federal mandates, recent state policy choices, and shortfalls in state revenue due to Wall St. declines and the mortgage crisis.
- As newly elected governor in 2006, Eliot Spitzer rejected property tax caps in recognition of their regressive nature and the belief that communities should decide how much they wish to invest in their public schools.
- The NYS Commission on Property Tax caps does not include representation from those responsible to deliver K-12 education or who will be directly impacted by the Commission's recommendations, i.e. the K-12 educational community (school boards, superintendents, business officials) or parents.
- The charge to the Commission is ambiguous in that it first calls for examination of the effectiveness of property tax caps, then asks for an effective approach to limit school property tax growth, making the decision seem predetermined.
- Property tax caps do nothing to change the main drivers behind high property taxes. Expenditures for energy, contractual employee health and pension obligations and state and federal mandates are beyond school district control.
- States that have imposed property or spending caps on school districts have experienced loss in educational quality in their schools. According to law or regulation, contractual obligations and mandated expenses must be met therefore school districts are forced to cut program and staffing to meet those requirements.
- Property tax caps foster greater inequity between low-wealth and affluent communities. Affluent areas are better able to override tax caps and/or create foundations that supplement school district budgets.
- Some forms of property tax caps already exist. Most NY public school spending is determined through public vote and balanced by debt limits and spending caps (contingency plans) on school budgets that fail to win local community approval.
- Tax relief measures that New York State has already adopted through STAR and local exemption options have been effective in many communities, particularly in providing relief for low income senior citizens.
- Imposing caps on school property taxes from the State level would interfere with New York State's long tradition of local (community) control.
- In the 2008 *Quality Counts* report, New York ranks #1 in the nation for investment in education and is on-course for improving educational achievement. NY ranks #1 for highest proportion of students scoring 3 or better on at least one A.P. exam.
- NY's overburdened property tax payers need relief and our schools need to stay on-course for improvement. Alternative measures, such as tax circuit breakers, could provide relief without diminishing educational quality and should be explored.