

CC: Super
8-15-1

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August 8, 2013

Senator Lisa Baker
2512 Route 6
Hawley, PA 18428

**Re: Lehigh Township, Wayne County, Pennsylvania
Tax Equalization**

Dear Senator Baker:

As you may recall, I represent Lehigh Township, Wayne County, Pennsylvania with respect to a disparity in Tax Treatment by the North Pocono School District. Specifically, the nine Municipalities which comprise the Lackawanna County portion of the North Pocono School District pay approximately one half in school taxes as compared to the one Municipality in Wayne County in the North Pocono School District that being Lehigh Township.

Your office hosted a meeting at which time representatives of the School District, State Tax Equalization Board and Lehigh Township Officials were allowed to voice their opinions regarding the Tax Treatment by North Pocono School District. At that meeting it was concluded that there is a disparity in the taxes paid by Lackawanna County residents and Wayne County residents in the School District.

Unfortunately, I must report to you that since our meeting the State Tax Equalization Board and Officials of the North Pocono School District have met and concluded that the alternative set forth in Section 672.1 of the Public School Code would result in even higher taxes being paid by Lehigh Township residents.

A closer examination of the problem by concerned citizens of Lehigh Township has indicated that the real problem is that the State Tax Equalization Board multiplier for Lackawanna County is based upon all Municipalities in the county and not just in and not just the nine Municipalities in North Pocono School District. Further, Lackawanna County has failed to do a county wide reassessment since 1972. As you may recall, Wayne County completed a county wide assessment in 2004.

Representatives of a concerned group of tax payers have provided the Township with a grievance form and breakdown regarding sales between 2010 and 2012 in the North Pocono School District. As this chart clearly shows residents of comparable properties in Lackawanna County are paying approximately fifty to sixty percent of what similarly situated and similarly valued properties are paying in Wayne County. These are similar properties situated in the same School District. The North Pocono School District and State Tax Equalization Board are complying with existing law, however, there is clearly a non-uniformity of taxes between the nine Municipalities in Lackawanna County and Lehigh Township, Wayne County as that law is applied by the North Pocono School District.

In an effort to amicably resolve this matter, I would once again request that your office attempt to host a mediation between the appropriate members of the School District, State Tax Equalization Board and appropriate members of the Municipalities and Officials in Lackawanna County and Wayne County.

This matter needs to be resolved in the near future otherwise the residents of Lehigh Township will continue to suffer excessive taxation and the Township will be frustrated in its' efforts to grow economically as compared to other areas located within the School District. I will conclude my letter with a question that was raised to me by a resident in Lehigh Township who is attempting to sell his property, "Why would you buy a property in Lehigh Township, Wayne County that pays Six Thousand Dollars (\$6,000.00) a year in taxes when you can buy a similarly situated home in Lackawanna County and pay only Three Thousand Dollars (\$3,000.00) per year in school taxes?" Therein lies the dilemma for the residents and tax payers of Lehigh Township.

I want to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind cooperation and assistance in an effort to resolve this matter.

Sincerely,



Anthony J. Magnotta, Esq.

AJM:cm

cc: Lehigh Township, Board of Supervisors
Kim Scanlon, Esquire, Solicitor for North Pocono School District
Wayne County Commissioners
Lackawanna County Commissioners
Mike Peifer, State Representative