



## In Case You Missed It: The Star-Ledger Editorial Board - "It was his finest moment as governor."

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Governor Chris Christie's plan offers hope on property taxes

The Star-Ledger Editorial Board

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Yesterday, Gov. Chris Christie offered Democrats a meaningful compromise on property taxes that clears the path to finally addressing the state's biggest problem.

It was his finest moment as governor. Our hope is that Democrats resist the pressure from public employee unions and shake the hand the governor has extended.

The core of Christie's plan is a 2.5 percent cap on property tax increases. He wants a hard cap that would not allow towns and schools to exempt major cost-drivers like pension and health costs, as the existing cap does. And he would give local voters the power to override the cap in a referendum.

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The whole purpose of the cap is to force towns and schools to wrestle down those costs, rather than pass them on to taxpayers.

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The second big fight will center on the governor's "tool box" of reforms aimed at helping local officials control costs. The sharpest tool would cap increases in labor costs at 2.5 percent as well. That would include salaries and benefits, and apply to both towns and schools.

That's the provision that the unions will fight to the death, in the Legislature and in the courts. But it's time for that showdown. Labor costs constitute the bulk of local spending. Without this tool, it's unreasonable to expect local officials to live with the cap.

The initiative now moves to Democrats. If they resist this sensible reform, they better have a good explanation for voters next year.

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