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In Case You Missed It: Governor Chris Christie – “Take it out of the hands of the politicians, take it out of the hands of the judges, and put it in the hands of the people who pay the bills.”

Tuesday, May 11, 2010 • Tags: [Property Taxes](#)

Yesterday Governor Chris Christie presented his package of bills that will finally supply New Jersey with "real, lasting, sustained property tax reform."

Audio of the Governor's opening remarks during Monday's press conference can be heard on the [Governor's website](#).

A full transcript of those remarks are provided below.

GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE:

Good afternoon. I have instructed my chief counsel Jeff Chiesa to deliver to Senator Sweeny and Senator Kean, Speaker Oliver and Minority Leader DeCroce, that stack of bills to finally get New Jersey on the rack towards real and lasting property tax reform. The elements of it are already well known to you, I will just hit some of the highlights.

A constitutional amendment to be place on the ballot this November, to cap property taxes at no greater than a 2.5% increase without voter approval. We would also asks that constitutional amendment to include a 2.5% cap on spending for state government operations. There are a number of other reforms that are laid out in the releases we gave you today that we've talked about extensively both throughout the campaign, the transition, and now as we move forward into the last 51 days before the end of the legislative session.

Here's what the public needs to know. They have 51 days until real, lasting, sustained property tax reform.

The bills that are being sent to the legislature today, will for the first, deal with the root problems of New Jersey's property tax situation. And you've heard all of them. From mayors throughout New Jersey, and I am proud to have a number of mayors here, Republicans, Democrats, and Independents, who are supportive of this group of legislative fixes that need to be done, fundamental reforms, that need to be done in our state.

We have gone on for much too long in a band aid system that merely fixes the problem, and really doesn't fix it at all, but temporarily helps folks over the problems of the expensive property taxes in New Jersey. All of you have said in the press over the course of time, have reported over the course of years that the most important issue to New Jerseyans are property taxes. And this set of proposals will for the first time be able to get control over property taxes.

People will know that their property taxes will increase no more than 2.5% a year unless they say otherwise.

For 30 years, ever since the supreme court decision in Robinson v. Cahill, people of the state of New Jersey have been subject to politicians trying to run the property tax system in New Jersey. I think we can now uniformly declare that a failure.

70% increase in property taxes of the last decade and an increase in property taxes that are driving people from their homes, whether they're young couples trying to make ends meet, whether they're seniors trying to remain in the homes that they raised their families in, or whether they're middle class tax payers in New Jersey who are trying to save money to send their kids to school, to have a nice vacation, to be able to live a standard of living that they're hard work should in fact get for them. Property taxes steals from those folks each and every day, and we need to put in their hands, these decisions.

At the same time, they're going to continue to have services provided to them, and that's where the 'tool kit' for municipalities, for school boards, come into play. Unleashing mayor's from the restrictions of an antiquated civil service system that needs to go and allow them to manage their workforce in a professional way.

Getting rid of a arbitration system that is tilted much too in favor of labor and against management. And making it an arbitration system that can be fair to both parties. But making sure that that arbitration system must take in account the constitutional cap the voters have put into effect, the spending limits that needs to be acknowledged, and no that no awards should exceed that.

Again, unless the voters decided they want to have higher property taxes in their municipalities.

We need to do things like give the civil service commissioner more authority to be able to work with these mayors to help

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solve these solutions that civil service causes across these municipalities.

We need to make sure we move school and fire elections finally to November. Make sure we maximize participation.

Now you all say this year, that when all we did was double participation in the school board elections from the traditional 10-12% to 25%, the voters spoke loudly and clearly. We need more voters to participate in the school board and fire district process in order to have it reflect in a much greater way than it does today, the interest of all the people in New Jersey and not just the special interest who organize and set up those elections in order to rig the game. To rig the game so that they get the result that they want.

Shared services are something we have talked about for a long time, but candidly, we are put barriers up to these mayors and others, actually sharing services, there is shared services reform in this stack of bills that we are sending over there today.

And in the end, there is nothing that shows a greater contrast between the administration's position, and the position of the legislative majority than the two press conferences that you see today.

Now the legislative majority continues to play out of yesterday's playbook. Let's raise another tax, put a one year, temporary one year fix on something, and then we will be back next year for another tax. This year it's a tax against one group of people, the next year it will be a tax for somebody else. And believe me, people of New Jersey you already know, that the taxes they'll be coming after are coming out of your pocket.

Versus a position the administration is taking, and I believe legislative Republicans will take as well and many like-minded legislative democrats who are going to say that it is time to get at the root cause of this problem and to make the difficult decisions that the people sent us here to make. Which are to get at the cause of property tax increases. And that is the out of control system that is being run here out of New Jersey and being forced upon municipalities and school boards, being forced upon many county governments in many instances because a lack of political will here in Trenton.

And so there is an enormous difference between the two approaches. But there is also some commonality because I know that Senator Sweeney and Speaker Oliver will believe in many of these reforms, many of them.

And we need to get work over the next 51 days. We have 51 days to bring real, sustaining, lasting property tax reform. People of New Jersey need to decide, do they want to know for sure that their property taxes will increase no more than 2.5% a year, or do they want to continue to engage in the game of Trenton Roulette. Where the amount of their increase depends on which slot the ball falls in. Which special interest is going to be catered to. Which tax they want to increase that particular year.

And so, I don't think that the people of this state want roulette any more. I think they want a degree of certainty to what's going to happen with their expenses especially in these extraordinarily difficult times. And these times have put a great spotlight on the failures of our system. And it is now time to fix them. I think people are demanding it, I think that's what the school board elections told us on April 20th, I think everybody understands the kind of cuts we had to make in the budget here for fiscal 11, are things that none of us wanted to do. But the Lt. Governor and I got sent here to fix this problem, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

And through these sets of reforms, working in cooperation with the folks in the legislature who believe that the people in New Jersey deserve predictability and certainty in the expenses they have to pay to support their government. Those in the legislature who agree with us and believe that there is now come the time to give mayors, and council members, and school board members the tools that are necessary to control their costs, the moment has arrived.

In the same way that in March the day of reckoning arrived for our reckless budgeting, and taxing, and spending, and borrowing, the day of opportunity has arrived for us to have a property tax system that can be controlled, that can be sustainable, and that can work for the people that are paying the bills.

Today is the first day of that opportunity, and we have 51 days to make that happen.

This administration will focus on nothing else over the course of the next 51 days in the way we will focus on achieving these reforms. And the public needs to be engaged as well. We cannot any longer have business as usual in this town.

And in end by putting these proposals forward, we now put it in the hands of the legislature. I will be there to work with them every step of the way, both parties, if there are areas of compromise that need to be made, we will consider them. But we believe that these reforms present us with both a unique opportunity and a unique solution to finally getting at the root of the thing that makes New Jersey most unaffordable and that is our property taxes and overall tax scheme in the state.

And so, I look forward to the next 51 days, I look forward to engaging the public and the legislature in this conversation. And Lt. Governor and I look forward to working with the mayors like the ones here today to bring to them and most important to their citizens, the tools that are necessary to be able to finally get property taxes in New Jersey, not under control for one year, not under control for one budget cycle, but under control for the foreseeable future.

That is what we are talking about achieving here, not another temporary solution.

Not another feel good proposal.

Not another moment where real reform is promised yet dashed because we do not have the political will to achieve it.

They pass these bills, I will sign them.

And then it will become law, and then I will leave it to the mayors. To have both the opportunity and responsibility to bring sanity back to their municipalities.

And so I want to thank the Lt. Governor who has been integral in putting together this set of proposals. The treasurer, our commissioner of DCA, and the commissioner of education.

There is also a group of proposals here to reform our higher education system under the same principles. Principles that say put in the hands of the college and university presidents the ability to be both responsible for management of their institutions and to give them the opportunity to be able to bring those institutions into the 21st century.

We have neglected higher education in this state for more than a decade, and we need to first, because we don't have the money to give them more money right now, but we do have in this administration the political will to give them the opportunity to manage the resources they have better and to be able to provide a better result for the people of the state of New Jersey.

And so I thank the members of the cabinet who worked so hard with me and the Lt. Governor on this, the members of our senior staff who worked hard. And we are going to focused over the next 51 days in accomplishing real reform which will finally bring an end to increase property taxes in this state at a break neck rate.

And guarantee the people of New Jersey, that it is in their hands that they can control the rate of their property tax increases in New Jersey. And I think that will be a welcome relief to the people of the state.

Take it out of the hands of the politicians, take it out of the hands of the judges, and put it in the hands of the people who pay the bills.

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