

## Press Release

October 11, 2007

Coalition for Property Tax Reform

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"Despite repeated calls by New Yorkers for true reform, state officials have failed to change our method of funding schools from the current reliance on property taxes to a statewide system that reflects a person's ability to pay," said Carole Kraus, convener of the first summit of New York State property tax reform advocates. Groups from across the state met in Albany on September 29, 2007 to plan a united push for change in New York's current property tax system.

Twenty-six leaders, representing membership in the thousands, unanimously agreed to pressure the state legislature and executive branch to shift the burden of funding public education from the crazy-quilt system of about 700 independent school districts to a more efficient statewide program of funding. The summit also called upon Albany to establish a blue-ribbon commission to determine how to equitably and adequately fund public education in New York.

According to John Whiteley, spokesman for the Tri-County Committee for Property Tax Relief, based in the North Country's Essex, Warren and Washington Counties, "the groups came together in response to a common perception that years of property tax increases well above the inflation rate have led to a large increase in the number of families -- many formerly financially secure -- who are being forced out of homes and communities they and their families have lived in for decades."

Therefore, the groups -- now organized as the Coalition for Property Tax Reform -- agreed to:

- Demand establishment of a Blue Ribbon Commission to study school funding and recommend solutions, as proposed in NYS Assembly Bill A9239;
- Hold lawmakers accountable for the lack of action to protect homeowners;
- Elicit pledges to support school funding reform from candidates for election and publish those pledges in appropriate media; and
- Educate the public about school funding reform and the need for individual action.

"Our groups represent the concerns of tens of thousands of taxpayers from Ticonderoga to Long Island and from Rockland and Putnam Counties to the western areas of the state," said Gioia Shebar of TaxNightmare.org in southern Ulster County. As Robert McKeon, Director of the Tax Reform Effort of Northern Dutchess put it, "We recognize that revenues other than property taxes need to be used to fund our schools. New Yorkers should not have to choose between supporting education and keeping their homes."

The Coalition for Property Tax Reform invites New Yorkers affected by increasing property tax bills, groups concerned with strengthening education in New York, and lawmakers who want to solve a critical problem, to visit the Coalition web site ([www.PropertyTaxReformNOW.org](http://www.PropertyTaxReformNOW.org)).