



REP. KARL VAN ROY • 90TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

VAN ROY'S VIEWS

LEGISLATIVE E-UPDATE

Friday, November 30, 2007

State Budget - Working to Reduce the Property Tax Burden

Over the next few weeks, homeowners across the state will receive their dreaded property tax bill in the mail. It's too bad that it has to come at this time of year when folks are already spending a lot of money on Christmas presents and parties, but that's just part of life and we have to plan our finances accordingly.

Most people in this state believe that property taxes in Wisconsin are way too high, and I definitely agree with them. Some of the critical services provided at the local level, such as schools, fire and police protection, and road construction and repair, are supported through a combination of state aid and local property tax dollars. That means that getting property taxes down and keeping them down is a shared responsibility of both state and local governments. We need to work together to make sure these services are adequately funded while still keeping government spending and taxing in line with the taxpayer's ability to pay.

If you look at your tax bill, you will notice line items for your county, local municipality, and local school district. The officials you elect to represent you on each of those boards are responsible for setting their spending priorities and adopting an annual budget. You will see a line item for our local technical college as well. This board also has the authority to levy taxes, but unlike your local officials, these members are not elected. The property tax levy is greatly influenced by the growth in the local property tax base. We've seen tremendous growth in both Howard and Suamico. Growing communities like these can spread the tax burden around easier than in a community that is either land-locked or experiencing smaller or limited growth, such as Green Bay.

With the recent passage of the state's budget, legislators from both political parties came together and took a number of critical steps to fight against high property taxes. I voted to provide more than \$12.3 billion in state aid to local school districts including more than \$524 million in new money for our local schools. More state aid means school districts need less money from local property taxpayers. We made no cuts to the state's Shared Revenue program which helps local governments pay for things like police and fire protection.

Keeping property taxes in check requires more than just the state giving money to local schools and government. There needs to be control in the growth of local government spending because simply put, the more you spend, the more you have to tax to pay for it.

In our bi-partisan budget, I voted to renew the Property Tax Freeze that the legislature adopted and Governor Doyle signed into law in 2005 requiring local governments to limit their annual spending increases to 2% or the change in net new construction, whichever is greater. This plan was approved once again by the legislature for tax years 2007 and 2008, but unfortunately, Governor Doyle's veto pen raised the 2007 tax year limit to 3.86%.

We are doing what we can at the state level to provide much needed property tax relief, but as I previously mentioned, this is a shared responsibility. We worked hard with the passage of our state budget to show that state government can fund critical services and still live within the taxpayers' means. I believe that our local elected officials, with the additional state aid we provide to them, can and should do the same with your property tax dollars. Local officials should be held accountable for their spending and taxing decisions just as we are here at the Capitol.

When your property tax bill comes in the mail, take a few minutes to look it over and decide for yourself if your local elected officials have adequately shared the responsibility to fight against rising property taxes.

Wisconsin No Call List Sign-Up: Deadline is Tonight!

I am sure that most of you reading this know what the Wisconsin No Call list is but for those of you who don't, here's a brief explanation. It is a list of residential phone numbers kept by the State Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) of Wisconsin residents who do not want to be called by telemarketers in their homes. The law prohibits telemarketers from calling households that have been added to the List, with some exceptions.

What some people fail to realize or they forget is that registration only lasts for **two years**. Therefore, if you signed up for the No Call list more than two years ago or you moved and have a new telephone number, you are not on the list anymore and telemarketers will be able to call you.

Tonight at midnight is the deadline to get your telephone number on the updated No Call list that will go to telemarketers on January 1. If you miss the deadline, don't despair. The list is updated quarterly: January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Just make sure to renew two months prior to each update to make the list.

Answers to all your Wisconsin No Call list questions can be found at:
<https://nocall.wisconsin.gov/web/includes/help/consumerfaq.asp>

To Register for the Wisconsin No Call List:

Toll-free line open 24 hours: 1-866-966-2255

Online: <https://nocall.wisconsin.gov/web/registration.asp>

Expanding the No Call List to Include Robo-Calls

Have you ever answered the phone or picked up your voice messages only to be subjected to a lengthy pre-recorded message from someone you don't know? I know I have and I think these calls are rather annoying. They are officially called automatic dialing announcing devices (ADAD), commonly known to the public as robo-calls.

Telemarketers are prohibited from calling any telephone number on the No Call list for the purpose of selling you property, goods, or services regardless if it's a live call or a robo-call. However, even if you are on the list, the No Call rules do allow calls to be made to you in certain situations: if you are a business, an existing customer of the caller, have given prior approval for solicitations, the call is from a "nonprofit organization, or the call is made for noncommercial purposes such as polls, surveys, and political purposes.

I have co-sponsored legislation to expand the reach of the no-call list. The proposal will prohibit all uses of the robo-call except in the following limited circumstances:

- 1) The call is initiated by a school or school district to a student, parent of a student, or an employee.
- 2) The call is initiated to a residential customer by a person who has a current business or personal relationship with the customer.
- 3) The call is initiated by a governmental unit that is intended to alert a recipient of the call to a danger to the recipient's health or safety.

The bill does not exclude the rights of groups and organizations wishing to exercise their free speech through the use of a telephone. It would still allow phone calls to be initiated by a live telephone operator who either speaks with you directly about the issue or personally asks if you would like to be connected to an automated phone message. That way you have a choice about whether to listen to the message or not.

I think this bill is a common-sense solution to eliminate the unwanted intrusions into our daily lives of these robo-calls yet maintain important protections of our constitutional rights.

State Representative Karl Van Roy
State Capitol - P.O. Box 8953 - Madison, Wisconsin 53708
Toll Free: (888) 534-0090 - Fax (608) 282-3690
Email: Rep.VanRoy@legis.wisconsin.gov
On the Internet: www.legis.state.wi.us/assembly/asm90/news/

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