



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 23, 2007

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
Representative Gary Hebl/608-266-7678

INFORMATIONAL COLUMN

HOPE DELIVERS PROPERTY TAX RELIEF, RESTORES FAIRNESS

MADISON - In recent weeks, driving back and forth from Sun Prairie to the State Capitol, it seems every time I turn on the radio I hear a commercial paid for by the Wisconsin Manufacturers and Commerce Association - the state's largest campaign contributor - saying that property taxes in Wisconsin are too high.

As a state legislator and a home owner, I agree with my Republican colleagues that property taxes are too high - what we disagree about is how to solve the problem. My friends on the other side of aisle would cut property taxes at the expense of slashing funding for education, municipal services and health care. While my Democratic colleagues and I offered a proposal recently targeted toward Wisconsin's working families, which would exempt the first \$60,000 in value on one home exempt from school taxes.

The Home Owner's Property Exemption (HOPE) restores fairness to the property tax system by making sure everyone pays their fair share. HOPE would help every Wisconsin homeowner. However, I believe it would most benefit low-income homeowners. Generally, we know that the lower a homeowner's income, the greater the percentage of income that goes to property taxes. Fairness is something Wisconsin must continue to move toward in the tax code.

According to 2004-05 estimates from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, the average property tax owner in Sun Prairie would save \$588 as a result of the HOPE credit, the average Oregon taxpayer would save \$706, Monona Grove taxpayers would save \$719, and Stoughton taxpayers would save \$533. That's real money.

In 1970, homeowners paid 47 percent of all property taxes collected in Wisconsin. By 2003, homeowners paid 69 percent, according to our Department of Revenue. Those numbers are staggering, but unsurprising. Homeowners in this state are painfully aware of the ever-increasing tax burden. That's why I'm proud to share the HOPE plan

with you. This measure would take the first step in recovering some balance to our property tax system.

Besides reducing property taxes on homes, the HOPE bill directs the Joint Survey Committee on Tax Exemptions to prepare a report detailing which corporate loopholes and tax exemptions should be closed to restore fairness to taxation in Wisconsin. Over \$3 billion in tax loopholes have been identified by the Department of Revenue's Summary of Tax Exemption Devices.

Property taxes have risen faster than our ability to pay for them. Home owners are paying more and more taxes while big corporations get loophole after loophole. It's time to restore fairness.

###