

ONE STEP AT A TIME

One of those life experiences that I learned in the Army was that sometimes success is measured in feet and not miles. Such is the case with our legislative agenda.

There was a time, not so long ago, that our legislative agenda fell on deaf ear. But in recent years we've started to score some significant wins. They came slow at first and no more than one per year: the Stipulation Bill, the Large Parcel Bill, a re-write of the original assessor financial disclosure law.

We are gaining experience, and with experience comes momentum. This year, I am happy to report, two of our four legislative agenda items have passed the Assembly and Senate and now await the Governor's signature. The first deals with the re-instatement of Triennial Aid (A9757a & S6597a) for another five years. We, as an association, have long recognized the fact that Annual Reassessment is not for everyone; thankfully, the current legislature recognizes this as well. Obviously, we would have preferred reinstatement without a sunset of 2011, but we gratefully accept this legislation as a step in the right direction.

The second piece of legislation that was just passed in the waning days of the 2006 legislative session was our SCAR bill. This bill (A393 & S726 amends §730 of the Real Property Tax Law. This bill would correct an oversight in the original statute that left out the Assessor in the notification process of Small Claims Assessment Review. The Assessor is the person most likely to represent the municipality in the Small Claims Assessment Review hearing and we, currently, are not required to be notified of the petition by law.

What was missing from this legislative session was the passage of any bill dealing with ethics in the assessment profession. Some may look at this and say we dodged a bullet; this is especially true in light of some of the proposals that were being discussed. The truth of the matter is this issue will never go away, nor should it; whether legislated or self-imposed, ethics will never be a "back burner" issue. We are constantly under the microscope and rightly so. We are the recipients of a sacred public trust. We must be ever vigilant in maintaining a level of integrity and professional conduct that is beyond reproach. If we don't police ourselves, surely others will be all too willing to do it for us.