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President, New York State Assessors' Association
2007 - 2008

Past President Quick, Fellow Assessors and Guests,

Good evening. I am truly honored that you, the assessors of NY have placed your trust in me to represent this Association as your President, especially at such a precarious and challenging time - not only for our profession, but for the taxpayers of New York.

Curt Schoeberl, in his Presidential address, referred to the taxpayers as being the “true stakeholders”. He was and is absolutely right. After all, the taxpayer is really what we are all about.

Throughout years of misinformation and a real property tax system that has become more and more complex with each passing year, we have been perceived as the enemy, when in fact we are the taxpayer’s first-line of defense. We stand as the sentinels against a constant barrage of exemptions and haphazardly passed real property bills. Sometimes we are successful in warding off these bills. Unfortunately, far too many of them get through under the guise of being “taxpayer friendly.”

These well intentioned, ill conceived and far too often politically expedient exemptions have brought equitable assessment and equitable taxation to a point of being nothing more than distant cousins. Regrettably in New York State they’re not on speaking terms!

It’s time that Assessors and taxpayers realize that we’re on the same side. Taxpayer groups are springing up all over the State. Certainly not all are created equal. But some are genuinely looking for true and responsible change, not just a “lower my assessment - I, ME, MINE” handout. Yet with all of their good intentions, they are up against a system so complex that their efforts are thwarted before they begin.

We as Assessors know this system inside out. We know what’s wrong with it. We know what changes are and are not feasible. Yet, so many times we have gone to Albany and our concerns have fallen upon deaf ears. Let’s face it folks, Assessors are not necessarily

the most politically expedient group for politicians to be associated with. But Assessors and taxpayers joining forces! For instance, imagine going to Legislative Action Day armed with taxpayers' petitions demanding a Condo Bill! Just think of the possibilities!

I have spoken to and will meet next month with one such organization. Rest assured this will in no way be a departure from the standards of assessment practices that we are sworn to uphold, but hopefully a collaboration for TAX REFORM!!!

Unlikely bedfellows? Yes.

A difficult alliance to achieve? Most assuredly.

Radical? Oh yes.

Remember, radical isn't necessarily a bad thing. After all, this nation wouldn't exist had it not been for radicals.

Actually, I must confess. Being a child of the 60's, I've always had a soft place in my heart for radicals.

You know, it seems to me that the word historic has been bandied about quite freely over the past few years.

The HISTORIC STAR EXEMPTION! School taxes are higher now with the STAR than they were prior to its inception.

HISTORIC?

The Governor George E. Pataki TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS! What was once a confusing tax bill has been transformed into a document virtually impossible for anyone to decipher!

HISTORIC?

The HISTORIC STAR REBATE! Property owners are overtaxed; the State then refunds a small percentage of these taxes. Then in turn takes back a portion of the refund via the income tax.

HISTORIC?

Assessors and taxpayers joining forces with a clear vision of true and meaningful tax

REFORM.

HISTORIC? Oh Yeah!

LET'S MAKE SOME HISTORY!!!