

EDITORIALS

Tax reform resolution lacks key protections

Here's what you *will not* vote on November 4. You *won't* vote for lower property taxes. You *won't* vote to shift the local tax burden onto income taxes. You *won't* vote for a county sales tax.

You *will* vote to amend the Pennsylvania Constitution in a manner that could allow any or all of those things to come to pass. This is the text of Joint Resolution No. 1997-1:

"Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to permit the enactment of legislation authorizing local taxing authorities to exclude from taxation an amount based on the assessed value of homestead property, with the limitations that the exclusions shall not exceed one-half the median assessed value of all homestead property within the taxing jurisdiction and that the taxing authority may not increase the millage rate of its tax on real property to pay for these exclusions."

A Yes vote will allow this change, a No vote will not. The amendment is needed for school districts and municipalities to reduce property taxes on "homesteads." That's because the Pennsylvania Constitution requires that tax rates be equal, and reducing taxes on homes but not on businesses is now unconstitutional.

We'd love to support a change that would limit the overwhelming dependence on property taxes to fund schools. Doing so would mean increasing the tax bite on income, which seems more sensible and progressive. But passing this resolution won't assure this will happen. In addition, there are several reasons to be cautious:

- The resolution is so vague that a "homestead" isn't defined. We'd like to see any tax reduction apply only to primary residences.
- There is no provision that the exclusion will be applied evenly. All the resolution says is that *in total* it can't exceed one-half the assessed valuation in the taxing district.
- The resolution envisions each municipality, school district and county establishing levels of exclusion and tax rates. Combined with the already inefficient tax collection system many local governments use, this is a formula for confusion and waste on a massive scale.
- There is no requirement that property values be reassessed in a consistent time frame, which simply perpetuates the existing inequity between old and new homes, offices and factories.

• While Senate Bill No. 2, which is one idea for local tax reform, requires that most towns and school districts hold a referendum to make a change, there is absolutely no assurance that requirement will be included in a final bill. It is imperative that such a significant shift be at the pleasure of the voters, not officials.

There is a lot of confusion about this ballot question, most of it misunderstandings of exactly what we'll be voting on. But the bottom line is this—we are being asked to give the Legislature a clean slate on which to write tax reform that may reduce property taxes.

We'd be inclined to vote yes if the resolution required that voters have the final say on the form tax reform will take. Without that power the idea, no matter how tantalizing, should be rejected.

Why we aren't making endorsements this election

The Dallas Post will not endorse candidates in local elections this year. There are only a handful of contested races anyway, so even if we wanted to make endorsements there's no reason to do so in the majority of towns. And we generally don't write endorsements because most of the people who run for office at the local level do so for positive reasons, even if they are sometimes mixed with petty gripes or personal advantage. If we thought anyone was a real scoundrel, we wouldn't hesitate to say so, of course, and the Post doesn't have a general policy that prevents us from suggesting who we think deserves your vote.

We don't have any quarrel with newspapers that routinely make it a habit to endorse candidates, although sometimes they seem to stretch their reasons for doing so. And we don't take seriously the complaint that a newspaper is "trying to tell us how to vote," by making endorsements. A newspaper's opinion is only one of many factors that influence voter behavior, and it is dismaying to think anyone would cast a vote based solely on what an editorial writer has to say.

Our system of government relies on the willingness of every eligible voter to make an informed choice on election day. It should be a lesson that the decline in our government's performance, and complaints about it, perfectly mirror the waning turnout at the polls. That suggests a shortage of involved voters, and of qualified candidates. Don't let yourself be in either camp.

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Scene at the Bloomsburg Fair. Photo by Lou Mancini.

LETTERS

Board of pardons will ruin true 'law & order'

Editor:
A good "sound-bite" was George Bush's call for a "kindler and more gentle nation". If only he and his fellow party members had legislated for that as a goal. Instead it appears we have become a crueler and more spiteful nation.

Newt Gingrich just last week talked about "a hungry yearning" for spiritual wealth by all Americans and I think that too is a worthy statement. It certainly would be most advantageous for the promotion of the general health and welfare of America and a lot more inexpensive than the latest move in the opposite direction by the Pennsylvania Legislature which, under Republican leadership is now attempting to amend the State Constitution in what can only be described as a hateful

and spiteful move again against the "underdog" in our society.

The November 4 ballot will carry a referendum seeking a unanimous vote of the five member Board of Pardons, in place of the present simple majority. No less an authority on "Law and Order" than former Attorney General Ernie Preate has joined in a lawsuit to strike the question from the ballot. Mr. Preate said the amendment would take away the last hope of freedom for life-sentenced inmates. "This ballot question is extinguishing that sliver of hope and is not necessary", he said.

Another example of kindness as exemplified by a "thousand points of light"? Pennsylvania has over 3,000 people serving life sentences and more than 200 are on death row. Why would we feel any

better about ourselves, our state and our nation by eliminating any hope of those thousands of less fortunate beings receiving clemency, probably among whom are some innocents? No need to involve Jesus Christ because all true Christians know what he would say.

Finally, I would urge or implore voters to vote no on the proposed amendment, reminding them that "Law and Order" another sound-bite was designed to win votes not the hearts and minds of the people. "Law and Order" has made American number one in the world for having the most prisoners. So why not give kindness and gentleness a chance, or at least as much publicity as law and order.

John Allen
Sweet Valley

Hanover Area took fun out of game for bands

Editor,
Did you know that the students in high school marching band are not as important as high school football players?

According to Bob King, Athletic Director of Hanover Area School District, "the football team is more important than the band."

During last week's football game between Dallas and Hanover Area, Bob King informed the Dallas and Hanover Area bands that they were not allowed to perform the long tradition of pregame and halftime entertainment because they would harm the field.

I have been involved with high school bands since 1977. In that 20 years, I have yet to see one band dig up a field more than the football team. I explained to Mr. King "Our band wore sneakers and not cleats - we walk, not run." He still claimed we would hurt the field (although the field was al-

ready wet and muddy before the game).

At halftime, our students were not allowed to display their talents, dedication, and hard work. Mr. King must not realize that school districts spend a great deal of money to put together quality instruction, transportation, equipment, and supplies for their band programs as well as the football programs. These students just wanted to show their school spirit and perform under any type of weather conditions!

Mr. King also does not understand that it is the pregame and halftime show where these students get to show the public their abilities. Mr. King chose to deny more than 100 students from two schools the right to entertain a stadium of fans on a wet and cold afternoon.

Before the game was over, I

brought my concerns to Hanover's Superintendent of Schools, Dr. John Kmetz, who was in attendance. He was unconcerned with the plight of our students and band parent organization. Dr. Kmetz said "It is Mr. King's call and I won't override his decision." Mr. Kmetz's inaction therefore condones Mr. King's form of discrimination. This is not an isolated incident, it is common practice by this administration.

I wonder if the Hanover Area taxpayers know their superintendent and athletic director only serve a portion of their students.

I am glad I am affiliated with a school district where the school directors, superintendent, principal, athletic director, and parents support their students in any activity they choose.

Jerry Baldauff
Dallas Band Director

LEGISLATORS' DIRECTORY

Federal Officials

Representative Paul E. Kanjorski (PA 11th District) (Democrat)
Wilkes-Barre: 825-2200
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or 2429 Rayburn Building, Washington, DC 20515
Senator Arlen Specter (Republican)
Wilkes-Barre: 826-6265
Washington: (202) 224-4254
Address: 116 S. Main St., Wilkes-Barre PA 18701

Senator Rick Santorum (Republican)
120 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510
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State Officials

State Sen. Charles D. Lemmond (R) (717) 675-3931
22 Dallas Shopping Ctr., Memorial Hwy., Dallas PA 18612-1231
Lemmond's district includes the Back Mountain.

State Rep. George Hasay (R) 287-7505 or 542-7345 or 474-2276 or 477-3752
144 North Mountain Boulevard, Mountaintop PA 18707
Hasay's district encompasses: Harveys Lake, Lehman Township, Jackson Township, Lake Township, Franklin Township, Ross Township, and Dallas Township's north voting district.
State Rep. Phyllis Mundy (D) 283-9622 or 655-3375
Suite 113, 400 Third Avenue, Kingston PA 18704
Dallas Borough, Dallas Township except for the north voting district, and Kingston Township.

ONLY YESTERDAY



**60 Years Ago - Nov. 5, 1937
GOVERNMENT CENSUS WILL OVERLOAD POST OFFICE**

Local post offices are preparing for the gigantic task of distributing thousands of Unemployment Report Cards to every household in this section on Nov. 16 as part of the nationwide Census of Unemployment. Five days will be allowed for answering questions and returning them. Only persons totally or partially unemployed who are able and want to work and persons employed on WPA or similar government relief projects will be required to fill in the cards.

For the fourth time in five years the rural-suburban towns about Dallas on Tuesday clung stubbornly to their tradition of Republicanism while Democratic land-slides roared about them. At this week's General Election the entire county Democratic slate was swept into office. What was significant was that the county's Representative #1, Judge John S. Fine, G.O.P. Leader, who was running for reelection and mentioned prominently as a candidate for Governor next year, went down with his party.

**50 Years Ago - Nov. 17, 1947
LEONARD HARVEY LEADING RACE FOR OFFICE**

Leonard Harvey, a newcomer in Borough politics, led the field in a three-cornered race for justice of the peace in Dallas Borough. Harvey with both Republican and Democratic nominations received 334 votes. James F. Besecker also a Republican nominee received 319 votes. Both men were elected since two positions were to be filled.

John Rosser, director of athletics and instructor at Dallas Township High School was appointed high school principal at a meeting of the Township School Board. Promotion of Rosser will relieve Supervising Principal Raymond E. Kuhnert of some of his duties.

**40 Years Ago - Nov. 8, 1957
KINGSTON TWP. WAGES WAR ON FLYING TRASH**

Drivers of garbage trucks without canvas covers will be well advised to avoid Kingston Township. Police there have started a campaign to prevent flying garbage and paper along the highway. For the past two weeks police have warned all garbage truck drivers that the axe will fall unless they comply with township regulations on garbage removal.

A lot of old timers in Dallas Township died hard on Tuesday but four out of five Back Mountain municipalities voted overwhelmingly for a union school district. Single exception was in Monroe Township. The union district which will go into effect July 1958 is the first such district in Luzerne County and will replace the present jointure of Dallas Borough, Dallas Township, Kingston Township, Franklin Township and Monroe Township an unwieldy set-up that has been marked by discord and indecision.

**30 Years Ago - Nov. 2, 1967
TWO YOUNG GIRLS FOUND AFTER NIGHT MISSING**

Two young girls reported missing on Monday were discovered by Chief of Police Herbert Updyke in Kingston Township. The girls spent the night in a garage in Trucksville and were found when a member of the household opened the doors in the morning.

Shavertown resident Paul Lauer has been appointed executive director of the Luzerne County Tourist Promotion Agency. He will be responsible for development of a comprehensive program according to an announcement by A. De Witt Smith, chairman of the agency board.

You could get - Cube steaks, 99¢ lb.; beef liver, 39¢ lb.; bananas, 2 lbs., 25¢; yams, 3 lbs. 35¢; 8-inch apple pie, 39¢.

**20 Years Ago - Nov. 3, 1977
BOMB THREAT CALLED IN TO DALLAS HIGH SCHOOL**

All schools of Dallas District were evacuated about 2:30 p.m. Nov. 1, from an anonymous male, saying that "a bomb will go off in the Dallas School at 2:30". Since the caller did not specify a particular building, an order was issued by Dr. Richard Shippe, district superintendent to evacuate students from all buildings.