

Q & A: Property Tax Cap

Why not have a property tax cap?

Unless there is REAL mandate reform and/or an assurance of the state taking on a significantly greater share of its mandated education costs, a property tax cap will harm our schools.



But wouldn't a property tax cap mean we pay less in taxes?

By itself a property tax cap does NOT lower taxes or protect educational quality.

Didn't the state's 2008 Commission on Property Tax Relief report call for a property tax cap?

That report did not prove the effectiveness of caps. In fact, the report noted that after Massachusetts established such a cap, the lower property tax increases that followed were actually due to significant increases (8% annually) in state support for education. Increased state aid, not the cap, was the means of reducing the local tax burden.

Why wouldn't a property tax work?

The proposed cap will undermine efforts to reduce the resource gap between wealthier and poorer communities, especially if state aid doesn't cover inflationary costs and state mandates. Wealthier districts could approve spending overrides greater than the cap allows while poorer districts could not, even if inadequate state aid forces program cuts.

Don't most New Yorkers want a property tax cap?

While a recent survey found that 72% of New Yorkers support a cap, 97% of school district budgets passed in May. Which is more believable, a survey where how a question is asked influences the answer, or a public referendum? The public supports its schools and would not want them jeopardized by poorly crafted action motivated by sound bites.

Past action, or inaction, in Albany raises concerns about the Legislature's ability to help schools cut costs, especially by providing some mandate relief. Opportunities to save taxpayer money are routinely ignored and bills increasing district costs are regularly passed by the state government, increasing the burden on local property tax payers.

Without mandate relief a tax cap will damage education.