

## **New Jersey's Embarrassment Trifecta**

Verification of the old saw that things happen in three's was the arrival late last week of the 2008 Homestead Rebate Application, brought to us by the State of New Jersey Division of Taxation. Coming on top of the recent FBI corruption arrests of three New Jersey Mayors and two Assemblymen and the Exit 11 Beer – New Jersey Turnpike Authority flap, the appearance of the Homestead Rebate application is as welcome as the hot, humid New Jersey August and tomato blight.

While evidence of wide-scale corruption among New Jersey's elected officials comes as no surprise to anyone who has ever set foot in the state, and the Exit 11 Beer – New Jersey Turnpike Authority contretemps merely reinforces the need to eliminate this bloated bureaucracy with obviously too much time on their hands, the Homestead Rebate Application is really the final and most personal insult to overwrought New Jersey residents.

This entire program is symptomatic of what is wrong with New Jersey government. Let's start micro and move to the macro. First, the New Jersey Division of Taxation already has all the information requested in the Homestead Rebate Application. They obtained this in our annual New Jersey State Tax Return. Therefore, the Homestead Rebate Application is a complete duplication of effort, with mailing and processing costs added for further insult and injury.

Second, the program is an exercise in futility, as no homeowner who really pays significant property taxes qualifies for the rebate due to the income limitations imposed by the program. Thus, in true New Jersey government gobbledygook tradition, those who pay the most in property taxes are ineligible for the rebate.

Third, the program is a cynical government ruse timed to mail the recipient's check just before November elections. This gives the appearance of government spreading largesse, when all they are really doing is returning a fraction of the funds they have needlessly and indiscriminately confiscated from hard-working New Jersey residents.

Fourth and finally, property taxes are the fault and responsibility of New Jersey residents, not the state government, no matter how corrupt or incompetent. Property taxes are a direct reflection of local school board budgets and school board elections. These are voted on by the residents of each locality across the state. The real issue is that these budgets are not actually voted on by any significant majority, but rather are passed by a tiny minority because the general electorate does not bother to vote in these off-cycle elections – meaning they are held at other than traditional November election dates. So the blame for high property taxes rests squarely on the hunched and heavily burdened shoulders of the New Jersey voting public. If they sincerely want lower property taxes, they have the means to address that issue without any government program, not matter how poorly conceived or cynically implemented.

McNealy's Missiles  
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