

Politicians Continue to Ignore

Politicians Continue To Ignore Us The political scene on the national, state, county and local level leaves much to be desired. Political infighting among the various political parties has accomplished little or nothing for the people who elected them. As budgets on all levels continue to operate in the red, elected officials still insist on giving away our tax dollars (pork) to individuals and to causes they feel deserving of it. They proudly hand over checks with a smile as if they were giving away their own money, not yours. Yet, with all the budget problems, only one person, Assemblywoman Gunther, has suggested ending this practice. Special interest groups also continue to benefit from the current economic conditions. Their contributions to political parties and candidates continue to allow them to press for their causes. As campaign funds from the general public dry up in uncertain economic times, their campaign contributions will buy them greater access to elected officials than ever before. In order to assure their campaign financing, elected officials have and will continue to make concessions that will not help the general public, but rather those special interests. In order to attract and/or keep "rateables," elected officials have allowed numerous types of tax relief for businesses. Property tax relief gives these businesses reduced taxes to the point where they pay less per square foot than a homeowner does. Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) programs, allow a governmental agency and business to agree on an amount that will be paid per year rather than taxes based on assessed value. The sole purpose of this agreement is to pay the least taxes possible. They count on the promise of jobs, local purchasing etc. to negotiate the lowest taxes possible. All the taxes not collected from them, will have to be made up by you, the taxpayer. Speaking out against these practices brings instant reprisals. Those in power or those who support them will do all necessary to protect their interests. Their future and fortunes depend on keeping their people in power and their agreements secret. People who speak out are dealt with in ways that intimidate or cause personal, financial, or professional harm. In order to keep all this from the public, governments have become increasingly secretive. They use their office to go after anyone who speaks out against them. The use of "behind closed door" meetings has increased in order to keep the public in the dark about certain sensitive issues and/ or projects looming in an area. While you may recognize these traits on the national, state, or even county level, many may not recognize these tactics on the local level. Despite dire economic times, our town's recreation committee is still pushing for a youth center to be built in the town park. They claim to be able to obtain grants to offset the cost. Government sponsored grant money no matter the source (federal, state, county) is your tax money. Special interests abound in this town. Two large projects are currently vying for approval in our town (a car crushing junk yard and a power plant). With local elections next year and campaigns to fund, rest assured that special interest money will be coming our elected officials' way. These projects will be seeking reduced taxes or PILOT programs. These deals will result in them obtaining lower taxes while your taxes rise to make up the lost revenue. As for speaking out, we need only point to the horse head found in Councilwoman Gail Soro's pool. Even in our little town, political retribution is a fact of life. You must speak out and let our elected officials know what you think!

Let them know you prefer lower taxes to Washington or Albany pork. Let them know that a youth center is not needed, lower school taxes are! Let them know that reduced business taxes only raise your taxes, and this is unacceptable. Let them know that the promise of jobs must be a guarantee in writing. For every promised job that does not come to pass, businesses should have to forfeit 5% of their reduced taxes. Let them know that commercial properties should create revenue, not reduce it. Let them know that reprisals of any kind cannot and will not be tolerated. Demand that all talks concerning projects in the town be open to the public. Demand that elected officials publicly voice their opinion on these projects and not sit on the fence. Demand full disclosure when it comes to campaign financing, including all cash donations. Don't let your voice be silenced. Speak out, and do so often, for it is your money and your life they are playing with.