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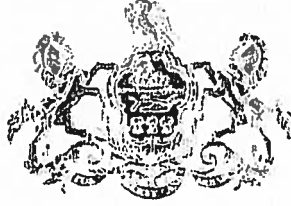
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Senate of Pennsylvania

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February 2, 2010

TO: All Senators

FROM: Senator John R. Gordner *JRG*

SUBJECT: State Tax Equalization Board Reform Legislation

I am preparing to introduce legislation to reform the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) and invite your cosponsorship.

Because of the Constitutional requirement for uniform taxation, it is necessary that locally assessed millage is equalized when entities, such as school districts, encompass municipalities in multiple counties. It is STEB's responsibility to conduct this equalization on an annual basis.

In 2010, there were numerous cases throughout the state where STEB incorrectly determined market values within municipalities, resulting in wrong data in as many of 50 of the 89 school districts that require multi-county tax equalization. While some of these problems were caused by obsolete computer programs (which are currently being replaced at STEB), there was an additional problem of lack of oversight by the STEB board, currently consisting of three Commonwealth residents who are nominated by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

I have been working with the STEB board members on legislation to help correct these deficiencies. My bill will add two members of the board consisting of the Secretary of Education and the Secretary of Revenue or their designees. Additionally, the board will be required to hold a hearing at the request of any municipality or school district aggrieved by any finding (currently law provides that the board may conduct a hearing). Finally, the legislation will require the STEB board to immediately review any finding that shows common level ratios (market values) increasing or decreasing by ten percent or more when compared to the previous year.

Please contact my office at 7-8928 if you wish to consponsor this legislation.