

**Public Hearing Statement by Robert Hume to Pennsylvania House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee - July 15, 2008**

Good Afternoon, my name is Robert Hume, I reside in the borough of Parkesburg located in the western end of Chester County. I want to thank the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee for allowing me to address the Clean and Green Program at today's hearing.

I am very pleased to be here today but also rather nervous as I feel what I say today can affect the adult residents and the children residing in the Octorara Area. How did I ever get in this position? I am a school director for the Octorara Area School District, a Member of the Chester County Department of Aging Advisory Council, Co-founder and Board Member of the Octorara Communities that Care. These are all volunteer positions and I love living in the area. Additionally, I am here because of a request from a friend, Representative Art Hershey.

I am here today to speak about Act 319, Clean and Green. When our legislators addressed the need to provide tax relief to the farm community, they recognized that unless they put something in place to make up the lost revenues that the relief the farm community would realize would become a burden for someone else. That burden fell directly onto the property owners of the school district. As noted on page one of the handout, titled Act 319, Clean and Green, the Octorara Area School District had \$160,770,430 in 319 exemptions. This resulted in a loss of \$4,733,568 in revenue. With the present Clean and Green Program that loss must be made up by the property owners of that district. It seems our legislators understood this situation would happen and in 1999 Senate Bill 1155 was proposed to help fill this gap for school districts that are heavily agricultural. Today, the legislature has the opportunity to follow through on this concept and provide supplemental funds from the state general fund as presented in HB 1960.

The Octorara Area School District district according to Chester County Planning Commission figures has the lowest per capita income and household income of all the school districts in Chester County and we are the most heavily taxed. Yes, Act 319 is a contributing factor in creating the financial situation in the Octorara Area that the property owners can no longer fund.

As a school director I look at the effect Clean and Green has on our educational system. The yearly Report Card on Chester County Schools clearly shows the struggle our district has due to the financial problems in our area. How can we compete with our neighboring schools? They have many more programs to offer the students, which mean a better education.

Our county government has the Landscapes program which assists Clean and Green by giving an incentive to boroughs for having residential construction (cluster) built in the boroughs and the results of this program has the Parkesburg property owner paying the highest property tax of all the boroughs in Chester County. Yes, providing services comes at a high cost. I went to our county commissioners a decade ago and asked for

assistance. They had an Economic Development study completed. They funded this study which outlined where commercial development should be located without compromising open space. What has been done with this study? It is collecting dust on township shelves as these townships do not need or want any commercial development.

I feel our Superintendent, Administrators and Teachers are doing a fine job. Our Superintendent has held meetings in all areas of the district and the response in each area was the same, please lower our taxes. One example is the West Chester school tax, it is one half that of Octorara and they offer many more student programs. Why, because West Chester is not an agricultural based district and Octorara is an agricultural based district. Octorara athletic programs are getting close to a pay as you play program when our neighboring schools are playing on Astroturf fields. Yes, we are a rural/agriculture area and I am extremely hopeful that our legislators after reviewing the information presented today will clearly understand they must address the very difficult financial burden that has been placed on the property owners of the Octorara Area School District.

I hope no one was put to sleep. But let me finish with three things I wanted you to hear: Number 1 - HB1960. Number 2 - \$170 million in lost property valuation. Number 3 - \$4.7 million in revenues lost..

Thank you for letting me speak and thank you for having the discussion about this bill.

**Attachments:**

1. Act 319 - Clean and Green; Loss of Assessed Value and Loss of Revenue
2. January 2008 millage comparisons for Chester County School Districts
3. Chester County School District Comparison - Value of Mill
4. Chester County School Tax Comparison - County Assessment Office
5. Chester County Municipal Millage rates
6. Senate Bill 1155 of Session of 1999
7. Daily Local News article
8. Letter to Judge Paula Francisco Ott from Robert Hume
9. Land Use Map of Octorara Area School District - Chester County
10. Land Use Map of Octorara Area School District - Lancaster County

**Act 319 -- Clean & Green  
Octorara Area School District**

**Loss of Assessed Value  
Loss of Revenue**

**2006 Act 319 Exemptions**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Land</b>	<b>Building</b>	<b>Total County Assessment</b>	<b>Act 319 Value</b>	<b>319 Exemption</b>
			<b>Grand Totals</b>		
			<b>319 Exemption</b>		<b>\$160,770,430</b>
			<b>Tax Exempt Revenue</b>		<b>\$4,733,568</b>

Information as of: January 25, 2008

<b>District</b>	<b>2007-2008 Final Millage Rate</b>	<b>2007-2008 Tax Liability Based on Assessed Value of \$120,000</b>
Octorara	31.610	3,793.20
Coatesville	25.700	3,084.00
Oxford	25.159	3,019.08
Phoenixville	24.440	2,932.80
Downingtown	24.050	2,886.00
Owen J. Roberts	23.960	2,875.20
Avon Grove	23.820	2,858.40
Kennett	21.950	2,634.00
Unionville	21.570	2,588.40
Great Valley	17.440	2,092.80
Tred-Easttown	16.260	1,951.20
West Chester	15.790	1,894.80

		2007-08
		Budgeted R.E.
Rank	District	Mill Value
1	West Chester*	\$ 8,135,259
2	Tred-Easttown	\$ 4,785,217
3	Downingtown	\$ 4,668,480
4	Great Valley	\$ 3,265,000
5	Coatesville	\$ 2,759,160
6	Owen J. Roberts	\$ 2,106,133
7	Kennett	\$ 1,949,079
8	Phoenixville	\$ 1,939,288
9	Unionville*	\$ 1,819,406
10	Avon Grove	\$ 1,703,711
11	Oxford	\$ 1,050,726
12	Octorara*	\$ 861,069

Chester County Boroughs Municipal Mills						
	Boroughs				Municipal Mills	
					Old	New
1	Parkesburg				7.0	8.0
2	Oxford				7.53	7.63
3	South Coatesville				5.5	7.6
4	Downingtown				4.5	5.5
5	West Chester				5.0	5.21
6	Atglen				3.1	4.1
7	Avondale				2.25	4.0
8	Spring City				3.15	3.62
9	Modena				3.4	3.4
10	Phoenixville				2.712	3.296
11	West Grove				2.0	3.0
12	Malvern				3.0827	2.9697
13	Kennett Square				2.35	2.35
14	Honey Brook				1.1	1.1
15	Elverson				0.0	0.0