



State Senator Bob Welch

Senate President Pro-Tempore

State Capitol, Madison

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LEGISLATORS PROPOSE PROPERTY TAX FREEZE

Current Doyle budget would raise property taxes 9.5% in 2003 and 7.7% in 2004

MADISON- Today State Senators Bob Welch (R-Redgranite) and Dave Zien (R-Wheaton) and Representatives Luther Olsen (R-Berlin) and Scott Suder (R-Abbotsford) announced a proposal to freeze property taxes throughout Wisconsin.

The legislators' proposal would freeze property taxes at 2002 levels for 2003 and 2004.

"Increases in property taxes are making it harder for the elderly to stay in their homes and younger couples to purchase their first home," Welch said. "Our property tax freeze will give people the assurance that they will not be hit with a huge property tax increase at the end of the year."

A recently released memo by the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau concluded that Governor Doyle's budget proposal would increase property taxes by 9.5 percent in 2003 and 7.7 percent in 2004, making a two-year increase of 13.7 percent.

"The reason the state has a budget shortfall is because citizens' incomes have not kept pace with government spending," added Olsen. "We shouldn't make them pay more when they can least afford it."

The Legislative Fiscal Bureau Memo also shows that the owner of a median valued home in Wisconsin will pay \$344 more in property taxes in 2003 and 2004 under the Doyle budget.

"This plan is a great step toward a freeze that protects necessary services and taxpayers," Zien said. "Now we need to build a consensus for strong taxpayer protection."

"Yesterday was the deadline for filing our income taxes, now we turn our focus to paying property taxes that under the Doyle budget would be at least 9 percent higher," Welch added. "Not raising income taxes is great, but people need to know that they are not going to be hit hard at the end of the year when their property taxes are due."

Senator Welch, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee on Finance, will be introducing a property tax freeze as an amendment to the state budget. The Joint Committee on Finance will begin working to improve Governor Doyle's budget sometime during the week of April 21, 2003.

Local units of government will have the ability to exceed any proposed property tax by a majority vote referendum, which is current law concerning school districts' ability to exceed their spending caps.

"Raising property taxes simply cannot be the answer to our \$3.2 billion budget deficit," Suder stated. "A property tax freeze will help Wisconsin get out of the top ten taxing states in the Union tomorrow and protect taxpayers today."

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