

What a Property Tax Cap Would Do

To the Editor:

“**The Tax-Cap Illusion**” (editorial, Dec. 22) did not make a convincing case as to why Governor-elect Andrew M. Cuomo should switch his priorities from capping property taxes to addressing the underlying causes of rising taxes. Your editorial called a tax cap “a blunt instrument that ends up punishing many of the taxpayers and communities in need of relief.”

I agree that the cap is a blunt instrument, which is exactly why I have long supported it. Sound cruel? Not if you know how politics operates in Albany, where complex issues like the state’s out-of-control spending get swept aside by too many legislators currying favors and votes.

A tax cap is necessary if we seriously expect our elected officials to begin dealing with the state’s fiscal issues, brought on by declining revenues and ever-increasing spending.

New York’s local taxes are now 79 percent above the national average, making them the highest among the 50 states. Property taxes are rising at more than twice the rate of inflation. Meanwhile, New York’s population is decreasing, resulting in fewer people left to share this growing burden.

I agree with you on some key points — the state must find ways to reduce the unfunded mandates it puts upon schools, counties and municipalities; to bring its personnel costs under control; and to facilitate school district consolidations when appropriate.

Just count me among those who are skeptical that our State Legislature will willingly take on any of these complicated and unpopular issues without some brute force being applied. A 2 percent property tax cap is the best method of applying that pressure.

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