

**Tax Reform
Action Coalition**
867 West Buckingham
Chicago, IL 60657
312-458-9202
www.trac-il.org

Neighborhood & Community Groups Supporting TRAC

Bucktown Community
Organization
East Lakeview Neighbors
Edgewater Community
Council
Friends of Holstein Park
Greater Rockwell
Organization
Hamlin Park
Neighborhood Assn.
Hawthorne Neighbors
Jefferson Park
Neighborhood Assn.
Lake View Citizens' Council
Lincoln Central
North Logan Block Club
Northcenter Chamber of
Commerce
Northcenter/Lincoln Square
Neighborhood Assn.
Old Irving Park Association
One For All Chicago
Portage Park
Neighborhood Assn.
Southport Neighbors
Triangle Neighbors
U.N.I.T.E. Civic
Ukrainian Village
Preservation Society
West DePaul
Neighborhood Association
West Walker Association
Wrightwood Neighbors

SB1498 Passes the House!

After "leadership" tweaked this bill—allowing other counties in the state to "opt-in" and capping the cap—SB1498, which limits property tax increases to no more than 7% annually, passed in the House by a vote of 67-44! We'd like to thank Assessor James Houlihan and his staff for working so hard to explain the urgent need for this legislation to the House of Representatives and their continuing campaign in the Senate.

The chief sponsors of this bill worked tirelessly. Thank you Representatives Lou Lang, Barbara Flynn-Currie, John Fritchey and Harry Osterman. Mayor Daley has come out in favor of the 7% cap and we will be asking for his continued support. Aldermen Flores, Schuler, Matlak, Tunney and Vi Daley have been out front on this issue. All of your calls, emails and letters helped push this bill along. Our work now moves to the Senate.

There are a number of groups that are opposing this bill. The latest one is a group of attorneys from Chicago. This group solicits clients from overburdened homeowners and appeals property taxes. They are trying to defeat this bill in the Senate. If you have hired an attorney to appeal your taxes, ask if they are part of this group that is trying to defeat your tax relief! Gary H. Smith, from the Chicago Bar Association: we have your number!



Senator John Cullerton, as the chief sponsor, has had meetings with the Senate leadership reinforcing the need for its passage. The 30 community groups from TRAC asked their

members to continue contacting Senate President Emil Jones and the Governor. There is a church group from Senator Jones district that has written 800 letters asking for enactment of this bill. Some people who are union members are organizing a postcard campaign to Senate President Jones and Governor Blagojevich. Other sponsors working for its enactment are Senators Silverstein, Obama, Collins, Martinez, Crotty, Sandoval, Hunter and Lightford. We would like to thank them for their support. (Missing in action are Senators Carol Ronen and Rickey Hendon.) The Senate returns March 23, 2004. We will keep you posted. See our Call to Action on the reverse side.

A special "shout out" goes to Mayor Daley for taking a proactive stance on SB1498. His support has been crucial in realizing our goal. We urge him to continue to put the HOMEOWNERS of his city and county first. (See St. Patrick's Day Thank You.)

Community Activism – Report from the Front Lines!

On a very cold night in February, Old Irving, Eugene Field Civic Association, Jefferson Park Neighborhood Association, North Mayfair Improvement Association, Portage Park Neighborhood Association, U.N.I.T.E. Civic Association and West Walker Civic Association held a HUGE rally at St. Viator's Church. Close to 500 people demonstrated that night with signs and bull horns on Addison in the below zero weather. Postcards were distributed to all in attendance! Thanks to Anna Sobor and Linda Pudlo from Old Irving Park Association.

- The Edgewater Community Group is hard at work taking the appeals to the next level: the Board of Review. They have been very successful with the appeals at the assessor's level. This community group is also urging all of their residents to contact Sen. Carol Ronen to try to persuade her to vote yes on property tax relief.
- The Greater Rockwell Organization was responsible for planting all the lawn signs around the Governor's house on Sunnyside! This group has written tons of letters to the "leadership" in Springfield encouraging them to pass SB1498.

**Visit www.trac-il.org for changes in the
House's recently approved SB1498
AND to be updated on any proposed
changes in the Senate!**

Call to Action!

Yes we need your help again and this probably...

...won't be the last time either. Your actions and commitment have gotten us a tremendous amount of support for SB1498. You helped get it passed in the House! But you can't sit back and rest on your laurels. Sorry! TRAC is asking you and all your friends and neighbors to take part in our three action plans. "St. Patrick's Day Thank You to Mayor Richard Daley" on Wednesday, March 17... "Saturate the Senate Campaign" (we got tired of using blitz) on Thursday and Friday, March 18-19...and the "Welcome Back Senator!" on Monday, March 22.



ST. PATRICK'S DAY THANK YOU TO MAYOR DALEY

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 17 • CALL: 312-744-300 • FAX: 312-744-8045
EMAIL: MayorDaley@CityofChicago.org

"Thank you for your support of SB1498. Your backing is crucial. Please continue to put the homeowners of your city and county first. Happy St. Patrick's Day!"

SATURATE THE SENATE – PASS SENATE BILL 1498

THURSDAY & FRIDAY, MARCH 18-19

A) CALL or VISIT your Senator's District office and ask for their support of SB1498 by asking your Senator to commit to having a one-on-one conversation with two (2) downstate Senators on this issue. As a constituent, tell your Senator you expect they will actively campaign for this bill.

B) Organize your community to PASS OUT FLYERS at your local el-stop during rush hours, grocery stores or after Church or Temple. (Do this on the weekend of March 20/21.) Go to www.trac-il.org to download the flyer.

C) CALL or VISIT Senate President Emil Jones, Jr's District office. Respectfully request that he STAND UP and SUPPORT SB1498.

Senate President Emil Jones, Jr. • 507 West 111th Street, Chicago
773-995-7748, Fax: 773-995-9061; Springfield Phone: 217-782-2728,
Springfield Fax: 217-782-3242; jones@senatedem.state.il.us

WELCOME BACK SENATOR!

MONDAY MARCH 22 • Call or Fax Springfield.

Have a message waiting for your Senator and President Emil Jones, Jr!
They will be back in session on March 23rd
"We need property tax relief – we need it NOW – SUPPORT SB 1498!"

TRAC is asking you to make your point personal. Here are some stories we have heard:

• *An elderly widow living in a modest home had to sell her piano one year to pay her taxes. Then she had to sell her collection of Hummel statues. She was selling her past memories for an uncertain future of trying to stay in her home. She has recently passed away.*

• *A family with two very active children faces a bleak future because the father lost his job and their assessment went up 53%.*

• *A single mother struggles with the enormous decision of changing schools and neighborhoods because her taxes could increase by \$3,000 a year!*

• *A retired couple are in danger of losing their home because the cost of their medicines runs close to \$700.00 a month and the assessment on their home has increased by 73%.*

Counter Point Argument to Opposition...

Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce: They oppose this bill because of "shift" to commercial and industrial interests. Point out that "you" have only one pot of money from which to pay taxes, mortgage, insurance, food, etc...the "fun" money for things like dining out or going to a movie will be curtailed due to the higher taxes. This will have an immediate impact on local businesses that you won't be able to patronize because of your high taxes. *The Civic Federation did an analysis of SB1498 and concluded that this "shift" would be about 3.3% spread out over 8 years!*

Lawyers that Appeal Your Property Taxes: They oppose this bill because with a reduction in taxes they are afraid they will lose your business and not make any money off the overburden homeowner. You can fill in the blanks on your own.

Chicagoland Apartment Association: This group opposes the bill for the same reason as the business community-- the shift! This is a little tricky. TRAC is concerned about the plight of renters and affordable housing in the city. Some of you also own small rental buildings. The Assessor's office has reduced the taxes on non-owner occupied rental buildings over the last several years. And again we would point to the Civic Federation's analysis of this shift. **HOMEOWNERS DO NOT HAVE 8 YEARS TO SPREAD OUT THE ASSESSMENT INCREASES. YOUR BILLS WILL BE DUE IN FULL THIS FALL—the second half of your tax bill PLUS the increase!** For some of us this will mean an additional amount of \$3,000 on top of our regular bill! Defeating this bill will not reduce their assessments. Defeating this bill will save owners of rental property only the 3% while homeowners pick up their increases of 50% plus. Reform has to start someplace. They should be supporting this bill and working with us for more meaningful reform for all.

Housekeeping Items...

TRAC would like to thank all of you that responded to our plea for donations. Because of your generosity we are able to get out this newsletter and keep you informed. We are asking those of you that have access to the Internet, please email us with your address so that we can send you updates and calls to action via email. This will really help us keep our costs down and you will get news quicker.

If your community group would like to be added to the growing list, just email us! If you know of a group that would like a speaker from TRAC to come to a meeting just email us! Visit www.trac-il.org or call us at 312-458-9202.

In conclusion...

TRAC is hoping that the faint light we see at the end of the tunnel isn't just a mirage! You all have been working very hard for property tax reform. While this bill is only the beginning it is the action that can open the floodgates to real and more meaningful reform for ALL! Recruit one more friend or neighbor to the cause – property tax reform! You have taken on a huge issue and are winning. Stiffen your resolve and keep going. Thank you for your involvement and commitment.



Tax Reform Action Coalition

867 West Buckingham

Chicago, IL 60657

312-458-9202

www.trac-il.org