

NEWS RENSSELAER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

Office of the Minority 270-2892

Minority Leader Ginny O'Brien 434-3347 ★ Deputy Minority Leader Keith Hammond 283-3329

Flora Fasoldt 466-1703 ★ Peter Grimm 273-1500 ★ Kevin Harrington 330-9114 ★ Brian Zweig 326-3980

www.rensselaercountygov.com

February 1, 2007

DEMOCRATS CALL FOR "TAXPAYER FRIENDLY" TAX BILLS

TROY -- Democratic Rensselaer County Legislators would like to see tax bills that are easier to read and understand. In legislation filed Tuesday, they are calling for improvements to the lay-out of tax bills as well as the process.

"The current billing system may not always provide clear, concise, information regarding the distribution of property tax dollars between and among town, county and special taxing districts," notes County Legislator Flora Fasoldt.

"In an effort to encourage greater transparency and understanding of government, we would like to get feedback from residents and local officials about ways to improve the format and types of information on tax bills prepared by Rensselaer County," noted Peter Grimm of Troy, a co-sponsor of the resolution. He says he hopes more "taxpayer friendly" bills will result from these meetings.

According to Fasoldt, "When tax bills went out recently, I received numerous calls from towns in my district. There were all sorts of problems and questions, clearly indicating there is room for improvement."

Recently the Town of Nassau experienced problems when the taxes of its special library district were lumped in with the Town taxes. It created the impression that the town's taxes had increased, when, in fact, they had decreased.

According to Fasoldt, "Nassau is not the only town that has had problems like this. Some municipalities have taken it upon themselves to insert explanatory information, just to describe the tax bill. I think that highlights the need to design a better tax bill that is more "user friendly." She noted that some counties have taken to using their website as a tool to explain tax bills. "That is something we should look at, as well."

The Democrats' legislation would have the Local Government Committee meet with local officials and representatives of Rensselaer County Bureau of Tax Services to discuss ways to simplify and clarify tax bills.

Grimm says, "These meetings will provide a means to improve communications between localities and the county on the issue of tax bills, to assure accuracy and readability."