

## EVERYONE WILL BE AFFECTED

In northwest Indiana, every religious school and every worship congregation of every denomination will be affected by the property tax crisis in Lake County.

Schools and churches in Calumet Township and North Township will be hurt the most. Residents in those areas will not be able to donate or pay school tuition as they have in the past. The property taxes are just so crushing. Schools and congregations of the same denomination in other areas will be called upon to help pay the bills of the schools and congregations in the northern part of Lake County. The financial problems will spread to the rest of Lake County and northwest Indiana.

This problem was created by Indiana's new property tax system. Or, really, it is "systems". There are now three appraisal-assessment tax formula systems. Except for Lake County, the elected assessors in every other county of the state reassessed the properties in their respective areas. But, in Lake County, the big industrial property along Lake Michigan was reassessed by a state agency in Indianapolis using a different tax formula that gave those industrial property owners really big tax breaks. The rest of Lake County was reassessed by a private firm from Ohio using another tax formula that resulted in higher tax bills for many properties.

For example, under the new property tax systems, the property tax bill of Alma Podgorski increased from less than \$200 to almost \$6,000 for her 70 plus year old home in Hammond. Alma Podgorski is a 67 year old lady on Social Security Disability. Her only income is a monthly check from Social Security for \$667. Since she got her property tax bill, she has developed ulcers. She doesn't know how to pay such a huge tax bill. Thousands of people in Lake County have similar experiences and are under enormous stress for fear of losing their homes. Since property taxes are added to mortgage payments, many people might lose their homes in foreclosure because they could not pay both the mortgage and the taxes at the same time.

Indiana is one State and there should be one appraisal-assessment property tax formula which is applied even handedly throughout the State. Indiana's property tax laws are poorly written and have an unfair effect. The laws need to be changed NOW before more harm is done to the thousands of people who are now facing gigantic property tax bills.

Governor Kernan should call a special session of the Indiana legislature NOW and challenge them to change the laws to restore balance and fairness. If the legislators don't change the laws quickly, then they will be stuck in the State Capitol while their opponents campaign against them. Please, join me in urging Governor Kernan to call a special session NOW.

Sincerely,

Woodrow Wilcox  
Griffith, Indiana

Note: This letter to the editor was sent to many newspapers in Indiana in the summer of 2004.