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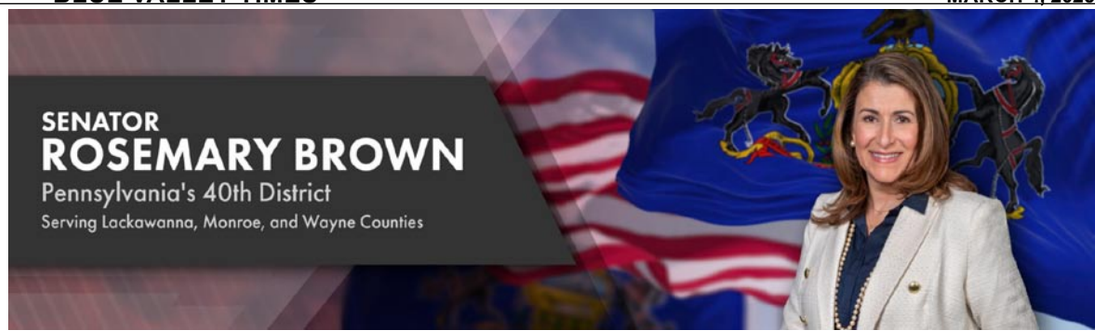

Does More State Funding Guarantee a Reduction in School Property Taxes?

By Senator Rosemary Brown

This week during budget hearings, I asked the Secretary of Education the question on everyone's mind—does increasing state funding guarantee lower school property taxes?

Last year, the 2024-2025 state budget continued my commitment to securing education funding for our school districts. As a result, schools in the 40th Senatorial District saw state funding increases of over 30% in the last budget cycle. This builds on my track record as a state representative for Monroe and Pike counties (2010-2022), where I helped secure state education funding increases ranging from 23% to 79%, depending on the district.

When our school districts prepare their budgets, they rely on a combination of federal funding, state funding, and local property taxes. By providing more state funds, school districts should rely less on local property taxes. But, as you can see from my exchange with the Secretary of Education this week, there is no requirement that school districts lower property taxes when they receive additional state funding.

This is why I continue to encourage residents to get involved at their local school board meetings, where school spending and school tax decisions originate.

In response to my question, the Secretary referenced the Tax Equity Supplement, a program that provides additional state funds to school districts with higher-than-average local tax rates. This means, several school districts in the 40th Senate District received additional state funding on top of their Basic Education Funding appropriation.

Here are the school districts in our Senate District that received Tax Equity Supplement funding:
Pleasant Valley School District – $869,598
Pocono Mountain School District – $2,281,224
Stroudsburg School District – $2,492,291
East Stroudsburg School District – $5,551,464

Given this additional funding, I asked the Secretary whether receiving it mandates a reduction in property taxes. Her response: "I believe there are four allowable uses."

The four allowable uses of these funds are:

Mitigating or preventing an increase in the school district's millage rate.

Increasing the homestead/farmstead exclusion to provide relief for homeowners.

Expanding or maintaining programs that supplement senior tax rebate programs.

Offsetting lost revenue from court decisions related to property assessment appeals or reducing school district debt.

While these are important options, none of them explicitly require a reduction in school property taxes. This is why it is critical for residents to stay engaged with their local school boards.

State funding for education is essential, but without action at the local level, property tax relief is not guaranteed. While I will continue working to secure fair education funding for our schools, real change happens when residents make their voices heard. I encourage you to stay informed, attend school board meetings, and advocate for responsible budgeting that prioritizes both quality education and taxpayer relief. Together, we can ensure that increased state funding translates into meaningful benefits for homeowners and families in our community.