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## Our Views

### Taking on taxes

A collaboration led by the Westchester County Association is going out on limbs few have tested in recent history in New York state: taking on the governor, state Legislature and special interests - really anyone who blocks tax reform, in order to secure a desired property tax cap, all before the legislative session ends June 23. If the Legislature refuses and hangs out a "Gone fishing" sign before leaving town, association leaders say, Gov. David Paterson must recall them for a special session.

Such is the urgency with which the business group views the economic crisis facing New York as residents and businesses are either leaving the state or would-be new ones bypassing it altogether.

In a press conference Thursday and a meeting with the Editorial Board the same day, association President William Mooney urged lawmakers to adopt the findings of the New York State Commission on Property Tax Relief, which was headed by Nassau County Executive Thomas Suozzi.

They see the adoption of a proposed 4 percent cap on annual school property-tax increases as Job 1 in their alliance's 10 recommendations to make New York state more competitive if not livable. Mooney said New York's property-tax burden, which is 79 percent above the national average, has reached a crisis level.

While Paterson has endorsed a property tax cap, he also has made clear he wants to avoid confrontation with lawmakers. The fact that all members of the state Assembly and Senate are up for re-election this fall makes the situation even more difficult for advocates who want a change, and all the more important to special-interest groups, like unions, who want the status quo. Longtime legislative leaders, meanwhile, talk out of both sides of their mouths, saying that the tax burden is unbearable - as if they had little to do with it - but offer few realistic remedies.

Enter the Westchester County Association, which has reached out to county and municipal government officials, the public education sector and good-government groups like the Westchester League of Women Voters to form a coalition and wage a "consensus-building campaign." It will include a series of town hall meetings for the public.

"You see a lot of anger, you see a lot of fear out there," said Mooney, who is determined to rally people