

Last Wednesday our County Legislator voted for legislation to increase the amount of money Webster residents pay to own a car and send students to MCC (regardless of whether you have a child that goes there), and at the same time this package cut aid to our schools by 50%. As bad as this may sound, the reality is even worse. Mr. Malta, along with a majority of other legislators, spent only an hour and a half reviewing the legislation before he was to attend a special meeting of the Monroe County Legislature to vote on it.

Given that the legislators did not have much time to review this historic legislation, I wonder if they had time to determine the implications of their vote. The fact is, this legislation contained millions of dollars in tax increases. To be specific, the legislation included: \$3.8 million in additional fees (taxes) to own an automobile in Monroe County, \$14.3 million in a “chargeback” (new tax) for MCC to residents of Monroe County, and the elimination of the \$14 million dollar tax credit that town property owners in Monroe County receive on their property tax bills. More significantly to residents of Webster, our Monroe County Legislator voted to require the average Webster homeowner to pay \$57.26 more as a result of the MCC tax. Our schools were also hit by this legislation. Suburban school districts in Monroe County will now receive \$29.3 million less from the county. This is likely illegal since the funding formula that dictates the amount districts receive from the county is a state law enacted at the request of the county years ago.

Additionally, this legislation would NEVER allow the residents of Webster to again benefit from the growth in sales tax collections. To justify this tax increase, this legislation swaps sales tax growth for Medicaid costs. The problem with this is, sales tax growth is likely to increase in the future but the “swap” is FOREVER. The “*swap*” makes sense only if the annual growth in sales tax collections is less than 2.5% - less than the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

The bottom line is: Even when our economy recovers beyond 2.5%, Webster residents will never benefit by way of a reduction in taxes (and here’s the sad irony, the 2007 County budget projects sales tax growth of 2.97% for this past year. If the Intercept had been in effect in 2007, it would have cost Monroe County over \$1,450,000.)

I believe that county residents now have a Legislature that either thinks the county will never have sales tax growth again, or thinks that a quick infusion of money is worth sacrificing our future prosperity. In either case, I believe the Legislature has let us down and burdened Webster residents with a host of new taxes, tax shifts, fees and chargebacks.

Webster residents deserve a Legislator who is willing to take more than an hour and half to review major legislation before rushing into the chambers to rubber-stamp it. I also think we need a Legislator who is unwilling to pass along a tax increase to voters without first determining how Webster residents benefit from a new MCC tax, car tax, and the loss of sales tax credits (which need to be made up somewhere if there is not going to be yet another tax increase).

Don't feel bad if your head is spinning with all of these numbers. It should be crystal clear after only 90 minutes of study ... it obviously worked for our legislators.