



**J. CHRISTIAN BOLLWAGE**  
*Mayor*

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Dear Legislator:

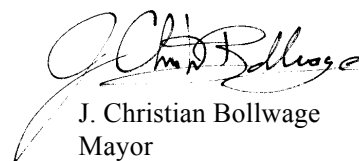
On April 20, 2010, the voters within the City of Elizabeth rejected the Elizabeth Board of Education's school budget, which called for a 10% increase of nearly five million dollars. In addition, an affirmation of this proposed school budget would have resulted in a 10% increase of the Board of Education tax levy, further burdening already struggling taxpayers during this difficult fiscal climate.

With the voters of the City of Elizabeth rejecting the 10% increase, the Elizabeth City Council moved to reduce the Elizabeth Board of Education budget and propose recommendations for reductions in excessive administrative positions. The Elizabeth City Council presented these findings, which called for \$4,945,916 in savings through eliminating non-essential administrative positions, at a special meeting, which was open to the public. The tax levy would have been reduced from \$48,673,323 to \$43,727,407, providing significant savings to Elizabeth's taxpayers. However, Commissioner Schundler re-instated the cuts made by the Elizabeth City Council, resulting in an additional \$170 per household. In addition, Commissioner Schundler's decisions on school budgets were not consistent throughout the state. According to *The Star Ledger* newspaper, on June 28, 2010 Commissioner Schundler cut \$1.4 million from the North Hunterdon-Voorhees Regional High School District budget; "...this reduction means taxpayers will pay 3 percent less than originally proposed."

As you are all aware, Governor Christie has called a special session to discuss the incorporation of the 2.5% Cap and ultimate constitutional amendment, which proposes to result in property tax relief for residents through a reform agenda. Yet, with members of his own administration enforcing mandatory tax levy increases, it is the residents of New Jersey that will be adversely impacted, resulting not in tax relief, but in increased financial burden. Municipalities continue to do more with less and share the "pain," however services cannot be effectively provided within the constraint of the proposed Cap. Additional mandatory costs such as the increased Board of Education 10% tax levy coupled with a stringent 2.5% Cap, only punishes municipalities for efficient fiscal management as well as their continual efforts to safeguard the health, safety, and financial well-being of its residents.

The 2.5% Cap does not work for New Jersey's municipalities and especially our state's residents. This amendment will result in increased hardships and difficulty in providing the services our residents need and deserve. Rewarding institutions such as the Elizabeth Board of Education in spite of the clear rejection of the school budget by the voters, is unfair and clearly demonstrates the inequality of burden sharing throughout not only our state, but in one municipality.

Sincerely,

  
J. Christian Bollwage  
Mayor