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PENNSYLVANIA
STATE
TAX COLLECTORS'
ASSOCIATION, INC.

PSTCA is working toward the goal of better communication between the taxpayer, tax collector and all elected officials of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Summer 2011 Newsletter

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www.PSTCA.org

A Message from the President

Greetings Fellow Collectors! Due to time constraints, there is a lot packed into this issue. Please make an effort to read it from cover to cover.

First, let me again thank all of you for your cards, calls, well wishes and especially your prayers during the time of my surgery and recovery. I am feeling much better and am now ready to resume the "fight."

I am very happy to report that over 60% of you returned the SR250 survey put out by the Legislative Budget & Finance Committee. To date, this was the best chance that we have had to communicate just what is involved in our jobs as tax collectors. Dr. Nardone of the LF&BC has been very faithful in keeping me informed of the committee's progress. As of this letter, a final report has not been submitted. We will inform you when it is.

In May, three Bucks County collectors and I spoke before the Local Government Committee in Harrisburg. This Committee is chaired by Sen. McIlhinney and concerns the "Right to Know" law as it deals with companies (mainly Signature Solutions) requesting information. This committee is taking another long

look at the RTK and changes that are being made which will affect us.

I need to change gears now and discuss an item vital to our organization. The first is our "annual dues drive" Our fiscal year begins August 1, 2011, and runs through July 31, 2012. This year, for the first time, you have the option to pay with the enclosed dues slip or go to our newly-updated web site (www.pstca.org) and submit the information.

Many have asked me "Where does my dues money go?" We pay our lobbyist, Fred McKillop, a monthly retainer to keep us informed of pending legislation in Harrisburg that could affect the performance of our duties. The PSTCA publishes newsletters three times a year (this year being the exception with only two). PSTCA pays for: office expenses of the President and Treasurer; salaries for the President, Treasurer and Secretary; computer expense to keep our records updated; Board meetings three times each year; and travel expenses for the Board members.

I would encourage you again, as I have previously, to join the PSTCA and help keep

our organization strong and able to accomplish the tasks listed above. Our lobbyist continues to tell us "the more members you have, the more people will listen to you." You can ask to have your municipality pay your dues, which they do for their other employees, such as Supervisors, secretaries, and managers. The Borough Code is Sec. 1005(9); 1st Class Township is Sec. 611; 2nd Class Township is Sec. 607.

Finally, our annual convention is just around the corner. This year we are meeting at the Four Points Sheraton in Greensburg, Westmoreland County, October 7-8, 2011. I would encourage you, if you have never attended or have missed a few years, to please consider being involved again this year. More information can be found elsewhere in this newsletter as well as on the website. I have attended the convention every year since becoming a collector and not only look forward to it again this year but look forward to seeing many of you there.



William K Beardsley, Jr.
President - PSTCA



Save the Dates

October 7–8, 2011

53rd Convention
Greensburg

March 24, 2012

Spring Board Meeting
Holiday Inn Express
Breezewood

May 23, 2012

York County
10th Annual Seminar
Holiday Inn Holidome
York

Contact Don Murphy for details

June 9, 2012

Summer Board Meeting
Holiday Inn Express
Breezewood

October 12–13, 2012

54th Convention
York

March 23, 2013

Spring Board Meeting
Holiday Inn Express
Breezewood

October 17–19, 2013

55th Convention
Johnstown

53rd Convention is on its way!! As is the 54th, 55th, 56th.....

Don Murphy, Convention Chair

Would you believe that it's been three years already since we celebrated our 50th Convention in the Amish country of Lancaster County? Well, that was a special convention as will be the 53rd. We have answered some of your requests in workshops and are inviting some special individuals to help us make this year unforgettable.

First, the room rate has been reduced by 31% over Gettysburg! Take advantage of this because the room rate for the 54th Convention is \$102.00 before it once again decreases when we hit Johnstown in 2013. We are still working on the 56th convention but rest assured it will be higher than Johnstown. The Board of Directors has sent yours truly out on a convention hunt to see what the pricing would be if we stay at the same hotel each year. The cost of putting on a full two-day affair complete with five meals has risen sharply over the past three years. We are looking at all ways to keep your cost down so we will not have to raise the registration fees. For example, next year, at York, you will be on your own for Friday night dinner but will come back to a full convention floor of a Monte Carlo night! This will save us considerable amount of cash even with the Monte Carlo night. And York has a complete array of restaurants within a mile of the hotel. The local association is busy working on restaurant specials just for that weekend.

Since more and more of you are registering for three nights—Thursday thru Saturday—there is conversation regarding adding a Friday morning breakfast and eliminating the Friday dinner and entertainment altogether. As you can imagine, the price of a buffet breakfast is considerably less than the cost of a buffet dinner. We will always have the President's Dinner on Saturday night and the many door prizes. We have been encouraging county associations to bring a very meaningful door prize that represents their county. We said it is better to have fewer door prizes if they all are of excellent quality with a nice note describing the county's donation. We seemed to be heading that way, and I especially appreciate the effort put into a great door prize. However, last year there were a few uncalled-for door prizes that, to be honest, were embarrassing to the door prize winner. Let's not let that happen this year—or any future year. If you would like to discuss your door prize, we suggest you contact your District Representative and he/she can direct you toward this effort. Finally, on this subject, the Board would like to thank all of you who donate outstanding gifts—the gifts do not go unnoticed, and they are very appreciative of your efforts!

So, let's all head for Greensburg this year. Make this a record breaking year! See you in October!

Nominating Committee Actions

Dean Roney, Vice President - West

Here we are a little over three months until President Beardsley bangs the gavel to open the 53rd annual convention in Greensburg. This year there is the opportunity for you to become involved in Board decisions and actions. This year the board will have openings in District VI and District VIII; if you wish to get involved in any of the positions you need to be a PSTCA member, live in the District, and be a Qualified Tax Collector by the Saturday Business meeting at the convention. Anyone interested in any position currently filled may send a letter of intent to the nominating committee by the deadline of September 15th. As per our By-Laws, nominations from the floor will only be taken if there is no letter of intent sent to the committee and the seat is open at the meeting. Nominations from the floor will not be taken for positions that have a letter of intent. If you are interested, your letter/e-mail of intent can be sent to any of the three members of the Nominating Committee listed below:

- Dean Roney (Chair): 10140 West Ridge Rd., Girard, PA 16417
drgrdtwp@roadrunner.com
- Sherry Labs: P.O. Box 433, Plumsteadville, PA 18949
s.labs@verizon.net
- Thomas Citeroni: 31 Juniper, Homer City, PA 15748
hctaxcollector@yourinter.net

Current Board Members:

President..... William Beardsley, Jr
Vice-President/West Dean Roney
Vice-President/East..... Sherry Labs
Secretary Jane Miller
Treasurer Judy Emig
District I..... A.J. Kovach
District II..... Michael N Radakovich
District III Althea Brown
District IV Charles (Bud) Bloam, III
District V..... Dorothy White
District VI Corolla Anderson
District VII Debra Basehore Wiest
District VIII Susan D. Gelinis
District IX Joan Rothery
District X..... Jon Paoletti

Qualifications for each office includes being a Qualified Tax Collector per DCED listings.

Elections will be held on October 8, 2011, during the afternoon business meeting at our annual convention.

For counties that each District represents, visit www.pstca.org and click 'district representatives' on the right side bar.

Governmental Consultant's Report

McKillop and Associates

I recently conducted three training workshops on "How to Contact your Legislator." The first was with the York County tax collectors, the second with the Monroe tax collectors and the third was with the Westmoreland tax collectors.

Over the summer, I will meet with the PSTCA Legislature Committee to discuss a course of action on two bills. The first bill, SB 837 sponsored by Senator McIlHinnery (R-10), the Committee will plan a course of action to move the bill out of the Senate Education Committee early this fall. And the second bill, HB 715 sponsored by Rep. Hickernell (R-98), the Committee will discuss support of an amendment to make the bill more acceptable to the tax collectors. HB 715 is in the Senate Local Government Committee.

We are also monitoring Senate Resolution 250 for submission of a final report. The resolution is sponsored by Senator Earll of Erie County.

But the big Kahuna is the state budget bill that will pass before the end of the month spending some 2.3 billion dollars. As soon as an agreement is reached, the legislators will head home for a summer break to return the 3rd week in September.

And last, the President and I are working on a grass roots training program to be offered to all tax collectors over the internet. You will be apprised of the program and when it will be offered by President Beardsley.

I thank all of you for your help and support.

Region III Training

**Althea Brown, District III
Representative**

On April 7, 2011, Region III held a Tax Collector training in Bedford. After short notice of The Arena closing, Carol Whitfield did a great job of getting us a new location just up the road at the Best Western.

We had a great turnout with 50 Tax Collectors attending from ten different counties. Our speakers included Randy Mitchell from RAK computer who spoke about the tax program that he had developed for collectors who are not computerized or would like to change to a different program. Also, we had Trooper Michael Swartzwelder from Bedford State Police with very helpful information on office safety. Charlie Hurdt was with us from First National Bank. He is also a retired FBI agent. He is a good speaker and talked about counterfeiting and fraud. From DCED we had Michael Foreman giving updates from the state. In closing, we had Althea Brown, District Representative from Region III, with information on Resolution 250 and answering questions.

With approval from Madra Clay, qualified Tax Collectors in attendance received their six credits for continuing education. We were fortunate to have wonderful speakers and a great location.

A special thank you to Carol Whitfield for all her time and help she gave us. You couldn't ask for anyone better to work with. For all who would like to mark your calendars for 2012, we have reserved the Best Western for April 5 for a training seminar. We welcome all Tax Collectors to attend.

Senate Bill 723

Dorothy White, District V Representative

Williamsport is the home of the Little League World Series. The founder of that yearly event that puts Williamsport and Pennsylvania on the map for all Little League teams around the world was Carl E. Stotz. During his lifetime he served as a local tax collector. His daughter, Karen Stoltz Myers, following in his footsteps becoming Lycoming County Treasurer, retiring a few years back.

The SB 723 names the Route 15 bridge that goes over the Susquehanna river and into Loyalsock Township as the Carl E. Stotz Memorial Little League Bridge and directs PENNDOT to erect suitable signage. Let's call our senators and see that this bill passes especially since he was one of us not too long ago.

York County 9th Annual Seminar

Debra Basehore Wiest, District VII Representative

On May 18th, York County Tax Collectors Association held its 9th annual training seminar for qualified tax collectors. Forty-five qualified tax collectors from 12 counties met to earn their six credits to maintain their qualification status. The group heard from Citizen's bank on Act 72; Erin Miller, a local attorney, on Elder Law; State Senator Michael Waugh on the process of SR250; County treasurer's office including using the DCED monthly form; the USPO on mailings and finally Fred McKillop on contacting your local officials. The group asked Fred to come back next year!

Our next seminar, the 10th, will be held on May 23, 2012. They are held at the Holiday Inn Holidome (also home of that year's convention). The price is \$50 which includes morning break and hot lunch. Contact Don Murphy for further details.

District VII Report

Susan Gelinas, Representative

On Thursday, June 23rd, I attended a meeting of the Berks County tax Collectors Association. Discussion at that meeting centered on SB837, HB715 and SR250. SR250's time period to report back to the Senate is nearing or completed and we are waiting for the final report. It was noted that there is no further action on the Bucks County Tax Collectors suit. It is before the State Supreme Court and they are waiting for a decision. The group was urged to attend the convention to learn the results of much of this discussion and to become members. Records retention was brought up and it was suggested they look at the state website for particulars.

Right-To-Know Law

Sherry Labs, Vice President—East

In May, your President Bill Beardsley, Vice President (east) Sherry Labs, and two collectors from Bucks County, Diane Telly and Sue Snyder, testified at the PA Senate State Government Committee hearing on the Right to Know Law. Our testimony, which is public record, has been posted on our website.

Please visit www.pstca.org to review it.

Comedy at the Tax Office and the Serious Side

Charles E. "Bud" Bloam, III, District IV Representative

While many of you have been in this position for many years, I am in my second term and in tax collector years just a baby. Since being elected I have tried to learn all I can about the job and I have looked to those of you who "have seen it all." I attend conventions, seminars, and workshops and I always seek out other collectors to discuss the "required" duties and the "real" duties of tax collectors. When I got elected I guess I was like the majority of citizens in Pennsylvania who thought this job was to open the door, sit back and wait for the taxpayers to show up with their money and send it off to the city, county and school districts. As you are well aware (and now I am), the job is so much more and at times very entertaining. Every time I think I've heard or seen it all, somebody will trump the previous episode. I'm sure you all can relate.

Once bills are sent it is guaranteed that the phone will ring non-stop for at least two weeks and you will not be able to leave your house without being cornered with tax questions. We all realize it goes with the territory. While most questions are legit, some just baffle or amuse.

- "Somebody told me not to worry about this bill because they take PA income tax out of my check for my house taxes."

- "Somebody told me I don't have to pay if I'm laid off."

- "Somebody told me now that I'm retired I don't pay real estate taxes."

- "Somebody said now that my youngest graduated I don't pay school taxes any more."

As collectors, we have never met Mr. Somebody but he causes us much grief.

- "Somebody told me that since my wife moved in with her boyfriend and I'm the only one living here that I only have to pay half the tax."

I wish Mr. Somebody would stop talking.

- "I bought my house last year and I paid the real estate taxes at closing. I have the receipts from the lawyer's office. Why did you send me these bills?.....You mean you are going to send these every year, that's bullsh#!."

At one point, a taxpayer paid four of his five bills at discount. In November, I sent him a friendly reminder that the one bill was not paid and it was now in penalty. He came to the office and insisted that he never got a bill because, here it comes, SOMEBODY saw me on a back country road throwing bills out of my car window so people would have to pay a penalty and I would make more money." Wow, you can't make this stuff up.

On a serious note, this job is so much more than collecting money. I don't care what PASBO or the PA Economy League or a judge thinks. We were elected to help the residents of this state understand the tax collection process. It is serving the public, keeping them informed of changes and giving them what they need. We are a sounding board, an ear for citizens who are concerned about what happens to their tax dollars. Taxpayers at the very least ought to be able to have a voice that gets to city, county and school district officials who only exist because of the residents who pay the bills.

A few years back, Jay Himes, Executive Director of PA Association of School Business Officials, said this in discussing tax collectors, " clearly the

personal touch is a relic of the past. People are moving to convenience, efficiency and cost saving." While I agree that people do like convenience, efficiency and cost savings (all of which tax collectors strive to accomplish), the personal touch is not a thing of the past, at least not in my community or my office. I question the world Mr. Himes lives in. It must be lonely.

In 1992, my city, St. Mary's, consolidated with the former Benzinger Township. A commission of regular citizens was put together to create a home rule charter that would define the new city government and provide a blueprint for the citizens. The commission recommended keeping the office of the tax collector and keeping it as an elected position. The charter states, "In reaching this recommendation the commission was influenced by the fact that the tax collector's office is a primary point of contact between the citizens and their local government. The Tax Collector will continue to be the recipient of comment and criticism by taxpayers on all facets of City operations. The commission felt that the taxpayers should have some say in who fills this position."

I urge all of you to get involved, join the Tax Collector Association, contact your legislators and let them know the citizens in your city, county and school district want their tax collector local and elected.

Still Waiting

Sherry Labs, Vice President—East

A year has passed and the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has yet to decide whether they will hear the appeal involving the Pennridge and Central Bucks school districts v their real estate tax collectors.

If you will recall, both school districts have attempted to get rid of their elected real estate tax collectors in order to either collect themselves or outsource the collections. The tax collectors banded together and fought the districts, winning in Common Pleas Court. The districts appealed the decision to the PA Commonwealth Court and won. The Collectors then asked the PA Supreme Court to hear an appeal.

The PSTCA has joined this fight as we believe that the future of elected real estate tax collectors is harmfully impacted, if this case is lost.

We will certainly notify you when we hear.



Protect Yourself from Identity Theft

The key to helping reduce your chances of becoming an Identity Theft victim is to be proactive. Monitor your credit report by obtaining a copy of your report periodically to check for unauthorized activity. You can also remove your name from mailing lists so that pre-approved offers of credit and mail solicitations are not sent to you.

You may obtain one FREE credit report from each major credit bureau (Equifax, Experian, TransUnion) per year, by contacting:

Free Annual Credit Report
Annual Credit Report Request Service
P.O. Box 105281
Atlanta, GA 30348-5281
1-877-322-8228
www.annualcreditreport.com

[Information from the Office of Pennsylvania Attorney General – Elder Abuse Unit]

We Have A New Look!

www.pstca.org

The PSTCA has just unveiled our brand new website! Added features include links to continuing education classes, the PA Tax Collector manual, the PA Legislature, and documents of interest. Special members-only pages include a page outlining certain benefits exclusively for PSTCA members, form letters and correspondence, PSTCA position papers and a forum where, when signed in, you can post questions, concerns, etc. for other PA real estate tax collectors.

When signing onto the forum for the first time, please be transparent with your screen name as we will want to know who we are communicating with.

PSTCA membership/dues forms can also be accessed, filled out, and printed off of the website.

Please take a minute to look over the site and keep checking back as we have a lot of exciting improvements planned and will be continually adding material.



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& Dues Notice
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