

House Republican Press Release

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Press Office: 860-240-8700

MAKE CONNECTICUT SAFE, SECURE AND MORE AFFORDABLE



REP. FREY REVEALS SURVEY RESULTS

Many Connecticut families are struggling to stretch domestic budgets. Judging by responses to my 2008 legislative survey, it is clear that the cost of living in Connecticut is the number one priority for our citizens. Nearly 900 people responded to a legislative questionnaire that I sent to fellow Ridgefielders prior to the start of this year's legislative session. The results are in and they are decisive. People are concerned about taxes, energy costs and public safety.

These surveys are very helpful in determining the issues that are on people's mind. Since this year's session is a 'short' one, individual legislators could only introduce proposals that have a fiscal impact. That is why, in this survey, issues pertaining to the environment, teen age driving, etc weren't included. The part of the survey I look forward to the most is the comment section, where the respondent is encouraged to give their thoughts on any issue. I can tell you – even though we are more New York oriented, people do pay attention to what goes on in Hartford. And that's great!

The common denominator throughout the responses -- people are looking for solutions to help make Connecticut more affordable.

Here are some examples. Though these results are not scientific, they offer a reliable sense of public opinion and they confirm my belief that residents of Ridgefield feel they are overtaxed and that citizens are looking for fiscal discipline at the State Capitol.

Question: Do you support raising the state income tax on families with annual income of \$200,000 or above in the event of a budget deficit?

Answer: A majority 52% said no. The public believes this is no time to raise taxes and I firmly agree. The so-called 'millionaire's tax' as evolved over the years to proposals that would raise the income tax on family incomes of \$200,000. I oppose increases to the state income tax.

Question: Do you support a local property cap at 3 % a year?

Answer: An even stronger 81% said yes. I will continue to advocate for property tax relief for Ridgefielders. Many survey's came back with the 3% crossed out, and in its place was written 2%, or 0%, or no greater than the rate of inflation.

Question: Do you believe the state estate tax should be repealed?

Answer: A resounding number of 84% said yes. Many of my constituents have expressed concern over the estate tax and I will continue to argue that the tax is driving people out of the state. I know it has happened. Last year, a major Connecticut-based law firm testified that they opened a Florida office due to their many clients who are moving to escape the estate tax. Currently, the estate tax kicks in on estate s valued at \$2 million or more – not a 'huge' estate by any means.

Education funding is always an important issue in Ridgefield so the following question asked on the survey: Should state resources be re-allocated to other suburban and rural school districts more evenly? 80% answered yes and 16% responded no, with 4% not answering. This is a difficult question to ask in a yes or no format, but I get the message. Last year we saw an increase in education funding across the board -- Ridgefield received an additional \$700,000. I will continue to strive for fairness in the distribution of state education dollars.

On the issue of immigration 12% answered yes when asked if a person should be eligible for state subsidies including fuel assistance, in-state tuition or public housing if they are in the U.S. illegally while 85% said no and 3% did not answer. The issue that came up last year was giving illegal immigrants in-state tuition rates at state colleges and universities. I did not vote for the bill; it was later vetoed by Governor Rell and did not become law (although it was reintroduced again this year).

With the recent home invasions in Cheshire and New Britain, public safety has become an issue of heightened concern to many Connecticut residents. When asked if repeat violent offenders should be subject to mandatory life sentences, fully 82 percent of Ridgefielders believe the state should be tough on crime and 89% thought the state should enact stronger penalties (such as a three-strikes law) for repeat violent crime offenders.

These legislative survey results reflect that economic security and public safety are critically important issues on people's minds. Now it is government's turn to respond quickly and creatively to make Connecticut safe, secure and more affordable for all of its citizens.

If you have thoughts on the survey results or other issues before the legislature, have a local issue of concern or just don't know where to turn for assistance please feel free to contact me. You may call me at my home at 431-6799, toll-free at the Capitol at (800) 842-1423 or email me at John.Frey@housegop.ct.gov. I look forward to hearing from you.