

House Republican Press Release

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Klarides Supports Effort for Senior Tax Abatement



Measure Would Allow Seniors Who Volunteer Locally to Earn Tax Relief

HARTFORD- Deputy House Republican Leader Themis Klarides (R-Derby) testified this week before the legislature's Planning and Development Committee in favor of legislation she has introduced that would allow senior citizens over the age of sixty-five to earn a tax abatement by performing volunteer work in their municipality.

"We know that the property tax hits seniors disproportionately hard," said Klarides. "Many seniors are living on social security, pensions, or other forms of fixed income. The day-to-day choices for seniors are difficult enough; they don't need to be faced with a life-altering decision of whether or not to sell their home because they can't afford to pay the property taxes on it."

Klarides noted that the bill she introduced with House Republican Leader Lawrence Cafero (R-Norwalk) and Deputy Republican Leader William Hamzy (R-Plymouth) provides a creative option for seniors. The House Republican caucus is backing the bill.

"It is a creative proposal that has the added benefit of helping municipalities as well," Klarides said. "Under the proposal, towns and cities would be allowed to enact a program whereby seniors who do volunteer work for the town can earn a property tax abatement – a reduction in their property tax bill of up to \$750 a year. For every hour worked, the participant would receive an abatement equal to the amount of the state's minimum wage."

The town would include the amount of the abatement on the seniors' tax bill, and it would not take the form of any payment from the town, she said.

Klarides noted that the bill is modeled after a tax work-off program that is in effect in Massachusetts. Under that plan, 2,400 seniors received \$1.3 million in property tax relief in 2004. The program has been implemented in roughly a third of all towns in Massachusetts.

"The bill encourages volunteerism," Klarides added. "Towns benefit and seniors get a much needed tax break."

The bill, HB 5712, remains before the Planning and Development Committee for Action. This session of the Connecticut General Assembly adjourns sine die on June 6th at midnight.