Fall 2025 • Issue 4 Volume 22

AAP Journal

ASSESSORS' ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA

Contents

Calendar

AAP Board of Governors' Meeting
Wind Creek Bethlehem
November 12

AAP 2025 Fall Conference
Wind Creek Bethlehem
November 13 - 14

CPE Review Class
November 18 and 19

2026 Spring CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro - March 16 - 20
Site - March 23 - 27
Cost - April 13 - 17
Income - April 20 - 24

AAP Board of Governors' Meeting
DoubleTree Hotel, Reading
May 5

AAP 2026 Annual Conference
DoubleTree Hotel, Reading
May 6 - 8

Fall CPE Classes
CCAP Office, Harrisburg
Intro - August 24 - 28
Site - August 31 - September 4
Cost - September 14 - 18
Income - September 21 - 25

*Visit **www.paassessors.org** for more information.*

School District Increase Complaints and other Recent Attacks on the Base-Year System: Will New Litigation be Enough to Squash the CLR?

Christina Gongaware Noga
Attorney, Siegel Jennings Co., L.P.A

Disagreement over the burdens that should be placed on school districts in filing property tax appeals while also abiding by Pennsylvania's Uniformity Clause have come to a head again in Pennsylvania, as wide-ranging calls to change our state's base-year system are growing louder.

While we all know that Pennsylvania has long been an outlier in its base-year system of property tax assessment, it is also one of the few states that permits school districts to file increase complaints against property owners. And in recent years, courts have been asked to approve or disapprove the selection schemes used by school districts.

In *Downingtown Area School District v. Chester County Board of Assessment Appeals*, the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court held in 2023 that Downingtown Area School District's property tax appeal policy that utilized a monetary threshold combined with recent property sales was constitutional, but its implementation was arbitrary and violated Pennsylvania's Uniformity Clause; namely, it found troubling that the district only chose to appeal 16 properties though many more met its own policy's threshold. Moreover, the District offered no explanation for its selection of these properties and rejected a specific commercial property because "its counsel was aggressive." The School District appealed that holding and it is now before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, with oral arguments scheduled for September 11.

This is the second time in recent years that the Supreme Court has agreed to consider the legality of such a selection scheme. In a split decision in *GM Berkshire Hills v. Berks County Board of Assessment* in 2023, the Court issued three different opinions in the clearly contentious case. Because the Court was split 3-3, the Commonwealth's Court decision, which held that school selection schemes which target only recently-sold properties are indeed constitutional, will be upheld. In its Opinion for Affirmance, Justice Mundy noted that "if pronounced inequalities (based on changes in the CLR) become pervasive, relief compelling a countywide reassessment may be available."

Justice Donohue, in her Opinion for Reversal, stated that she believed that newly-purchased properties did represent an illegal sub-classification as a "newly purchased townhouse," identical to that of its neighbor, would be subject to an assessment appeal while its neighboring townhouse would not. The owner of the recently purchased townhouse, she wrote, "bears a disproportionate share of the tax burden in contravention of the Uniformity Clause."

Interestingly, the Court was able to come to a stalemate due to the passing of Justice Baer in 2022. Baer previously sharply criticized his fellow Justices in 2009 in *Clifton v. Allegheny County* after they stopped short of finding Pennsylvania's

Continued on page 4

AAP

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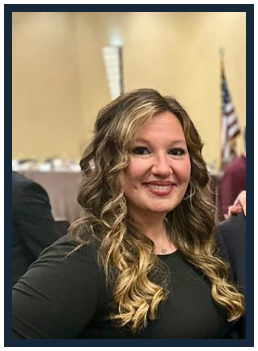

President's Message

Hello, my fellow AAP members,

As I sit down to write this, I'm reminded that just like the Pennsylvania weather, the world of assessment law seems to change with the seasons. One day it's sunny, the next it's snowing, and by the weekend, we're mowing the lawn in the morning and shoveling the driveway by nightfall. If you've been in this profession long enough, you know the same can be said of the assessment world. Just when you think you've got everything settled, a new ruling, statute, or court decision comes along to keep us on our toes!

This year, much like the seasons, we've seen familiar cycles return. The ongoing discussions around recurring reassessments in Pennsylvania is a topic that refuses to stay dormant. It keeps popping back up like spring dandelions in the front yard, whether we like it or not. Counties across the Commonwealth are once again weighing the pros and cons of mandatory reassessment schedules, and the conversation has reached both local courthouses and Harrisburg. Huge shout out to the Assessment Law Committee and all others involved in communicating our stance on cyclical reassessment on behalf of the members of the AAP. Thank you for your time and efforts here! Your hard work does not go unnoticed!

Now, I don't need to tell you that reassessments are about as popular as raking leaves in a windstorm. No matter how carefully you explain the fairness, the process, and the law, there's always someone convinced their taxes are about to skyrocket, their neighbor's getting a better deal, or that we've personally conspired against their backyard shed. However, these challenges give us a chance to show what we do best; apply professionalism, knowledge, and a little humor to what can otherwise feel like a very heavy subject.

As we look ahead to fall and winter, I encourage you all to embrace these cycles of change. Keep learning, keep watching the courts, and keep reminding your communities that we're here not to cause headaches, but to ensure fairness. And when the inevitable frustrations come, because they always do, don't be afraid to laugh a little. After all, if we can't find humor in assessment work, we're probably taking ourselves a bit too seriously also!

So, here's to the changing seasons, in weather, in law, and in the ever-turning wheel of Tax Assessment. May your leaves fall neatly, your snow melt quickly, and your appeal season be mercifully short. Happy "BER" months everyone. Stay safe, healthy, and most of all happy!

Take Care,
Sarah

Sarah Jordan, CPE
AAP President

In partnership with the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

CCAP

Legislative Update

By Jonathan B. Schuck, Chair
Government Information Committee and
Director of Assessment/Tax Claim, Chester County

Greetings fellow assessment professionals throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. By the time you receive this issue of the *AAP Journal*, we should be enjoying the relative coolness of early fall weather. I hope this season is filled with events and memories that refresh you both professionally and personally.

Eight months into the 2025/2026 Session, the following legislation has been introduced: 1754 House bills, 303 House resolutions, 921 Senate bills and 140 Senate resolutions. Of these totals, 49 pertain to assessment-related matters and three pertain to tax claim-related matters.

Following is a summary of legislation introduced subsequent to the prior Update as of June 4. While none of the three Senate bills have moved out of committee, the first is of special interest. The text has been replicated verbatim from an August 1 email communicated by Sophie Eyer, CCAP Government Relations Associate, to AAP Executive Director Terry Cochran and the AAP Board.

Senate Bill 567

The bill establishes a structured, recurring schedule for counties (excluding Philadelphia) to conduct countywide property reassessments. Under the bill, the Department of Revenue must create and publish an initial reassessment schedule by January 1, 2026. That schedule must require between 10 to 15 counties to complete a countywide reassessment by November 15, 2027, and continue annually so that all counties are included within a five-year cycle. Beginning in 2027, the department will update and republish this schedule annually to ensure every county performs a reassessment every five years. Additionally, each county must conduct a parcel-level data review of every property at least once every 10 years.

To help fund these activities, counties may impose a parcel fee of up to $20 per year or levy an additional property tax of up to one mill. Revenue collected for reassessment purposes can also be placed in a restricted reserve fund or used to repay self-liquidating debt. The bill further amends county financial law to allow the use of operating reserve funds for the costs of reassessment.

If a county fails to complete a reassessment on time, the Department of Revenue is authorized to withhold certain state funds until compliance is achieved. For counties that follow the prescribed schedule, their assessment rolls will be presumed legally uniform, limiting the ability of taxing bodies to appeal assessments except in specific circumstances, such as property use changes or new subdivisions.

The bill also reestablishes the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) within the Department of Revenue. The board is tasked with calculating property values and assessment ratios, collecting and standardizing property data, and assisting counties with best practices in valuation and reassessment. A new 13-member advisory committee, made up of representatives from state agencies, the legislature, counties, and assessors, will support the board's work.

Finally, Senate Bill 567 repeals certain provisions of the Community and Economic Development Enhancement Act and transfers those responsibilities to the updated structure under Title 53.

Continued on page 6

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AAP Journal

The AAP Journal is published four times a year.

Deadline for the Winter 2026 issue is December 5, 2025.

Article submissions are welcome.

Please send to:
Terry Cochran, AAP Executive Director

Publication Disclaimer

Base-Year System

Continued from page 1

base-year system unconstitutional and determined that it was up to the Pennsylvania General Assembly to make substantive changes (instead, they only held that Allegheny County's system was unconstitutional in practice, or "as applied").

He wrote that the "unlikely prospect of prompt legislative action" would "result in ongoing uncertainty for the Commonwealth's taxing bodies and property owners," and "the waste of millions of dollars" in litigation costs, as well as the loss of "incalculable amounts of judicial resources."

Justice Baer's statement seems alarmingly prophetic considering recent events. A lawsuit was also recently filed in Commonwealth Court by the nonprofit Mon Valley Unemployed, which is calling for the Governor and Attorney General to issue an injunction requiring all Pennsylvania counties to conduct reassessments to end the "systematic overassessment due to the frozen base-year assessment schemes in their counties," which they argue is disproportionately harming low-income homeowners.

The result of this flurry of litigation remains unclear; however, it is becoming increasingly apparent that school districts, property owners, and counties are all sounding the alarm that our base-year system may not be achieving the fairness and uniformity that we are all seeking. While the constant litigation has been enough to give us all whiplash, perhaps it can ultimately result in a property tax system that lives up to the tenants of Pennsylvania's Uniformity Clause and finally guarantees periodic reassessments for all 67 counties. After all, a little optimism never hurt anyone.

Letter to the Editor

This letter is in response to an article in the Summer 2025 AAP Journal. The article authored by Camdon Porterfield, the Chief Assessor of Westmoreland County, was titled "Good, but Increasingly Unjust: The Veterans Exemption Quandary." Camdon commented on the Veterans Real Estate Tax Exemption (RETX) program which currently provides for tax relief for disabled veterans.

I am in a unique position to respond to his article because I was the Chief Assessor for Lackawanna County before taking over the position of Director of Veterans Affairs in Lackawanna County. I have seen both sides of the issue of tax relief for veterans.

Let me start by clearing up some misconceptions about the RETX program. First, by Pennsylvania law the program is for veterans who are rated 100% permanently disabled, not "almost anyone who stepped foot overseas" as Camdon phrased it. In Lackawanna County there are 12,000 veterans and only 500 of them are tax exempt, that is one half of one percent of the properties in the county. To qualify for the program a veteran must be 100% permanently disabled, having served during a wartime period and their income (for 2025) must be below $114,637. This means veterans that have been either grievously wounded, exposed to dangerous toxins or injured to the point of not being able to properly function on a daily basis.

Secondly, the County Assessment Boards are not being charged with determining "any and all eligibility appeals." The Appeals Boards have the final say in whether to accept or deny the exemption, however they are not being tasked with "reviewing and keeping personal medical records." The County Veterans Affairs offices have Veteran Support Officers (VSO), accredited by the state Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMVA), who are tasked with assisting veterans with disability, pension and tax exemption applications. These are the people who will handle the veteran's military, medical and personal records with the utmost confidentiality, accuracy and compassion.

The VSO is the first screener as they fill out the disability application, then the application goes on to the federal Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) for a determination on the veteran's rating. If the veteran is granted a rating of 100%, which many times takes years, if not decades, then the veteran can apply for the RETX. That application goes to the DMVA for approval or denial. If approved, the letter of approval is the only document that the Appeals Board will review when they decide whether to accept or deny the exemption.

Thirdly, there are, and will continue to be, unusual situations with this program, as there are with any program that addresses thousands of people. The veteran with a million-dollar home that has been exempted is the exception not the rule, and losing the taxes for that type of property can possibly stress a county's finances, even more so in a smaller county. Most of the RETX applications I have handled are for veterans who are barely making ends meet.

Continued on page 11

AAP People & Chapter News

Send your news to Terry Cochran at *tcochran@pacounties.org* for the upcoming issue of the *AAP Journal*.

Our next deadline is December 5.

Lancaster County

Lancaster County has (1) CPE reaching 30 years of service, (1) 39 Years of service, and (1) recently new CPE as of Spring of 2025.

Kevin Edwards, Director of Property Assessment (30 Years)

Michelle Verdoorn, Appraisal Statistician (30 Years)

Tanya Rankin, Assessment Manager (39 Years)

Congratulations, everyone!

Snyder County

Congratulations to **Chrissy Bilger**, the newest CPE in Snyder County. The county is also pleased to announce their new chief assessor, **Austin Zelinski**! Congratulations on your new position!

The county is also saying good-bye to Chief Assessor **Wendy Cook** who retired after 31 years of service to both the county and the AAP. Wendy served on both the AAP board and on various committee throughout her time with the county. Congratulations, Wendy! Enjoy a long and happy retirement!

Summer 2025 Issue - Correction

In the Spring issue's article, Garrity Award winner, **Kim Deubner** was incorrectly identified as being from Jefferson County. Kim is from Cambria County!

Article Ideas

If you have any article ideas for the 2026 *AAP Journal*, please share those with Editor Kristin Montgomery or Terry Cochran, AAP Executive Director.

Memberabelia Volunteers

We are always looking for members to spotlight in our Memberabelia page. If you're interested, please Editor Kristin Montgomery.

Register Now!
AAP Fall Conference
Wind Creek Bethlehem
November 13 - 14, 2025

Registration is open online at www.paassessors.org!

Wind Creek Bethlehem

Legislative Update

Continued from Page 3

Senate Bill 929

This Constitutional amendment would eliminate school property tax as of June 30, 2029. Schools would be supported by state-distributed funds, equal to or greater than the amount they were raising through property tax. This would be funded by one or more of a number of options including an increase to sales tax, an increase to state income tax, a local income tax or a local tax on earned income and net profits.

Senate Bill 962

This amendment proposes to eliminate the school property tax. Funding for schools would come from a number of new sources including: a new or additional two percent sales, use and occupancy tax that would be distributed to the counties to disburse to the schools and each school district could impose a local personal income tax not to exceed 1.88 percent that would be collected by and solely for the use of the school district. The bill is extensive in scope and detail at over 300 pages in length. This summary should be viewed as a "starting point".

Nick Angiolieri

PROJECT MANAGER

VISION GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

Past Counties: Butler County

Overall Years in County Assessment: Six years in county assessment.

Years in Some Other Form of Assessment Business: Three years with Vision Government Solutions and four years as a Pennsylvania Certified Realtor

First Job Ever: PAC SUN - slinging clothes

Worst Job Ever: United Parcel Service (UPS) (hard on the knees jumping in and out of a truck all day).

What Irritates Me Most in the Assessment Business is: the general lack of knowledge

My Biggest Challenge as an Assessor is: Explaining the process in a way the makes sense to the general public, which is a daily occurrence, of course

Not Counting My Present Job, My Dream Job Always Was: Law enforcement.

If I Won Millions in the Lottery, I Would: The usual, pay off bills, help friends and family, etc. I would, however, still work in the assessment field

Favorite Vacation Memory: Hiking Jenny Lake in Yellowstone with my amazing wife.

Favorite Food and Drink: Steak and potatoes and coffee

Favorite Movie: *Almost Heroes*

Funniest Assessment story: Although not funny at the time! My partner and I were verifying buildings on a large parcel. We noticed a garage on the far end of the parcel, so as most assessors would do, we were off to measure and list. Turning the corner while measuring, I noticed the homeowner was on his way. It was at that point I noticed he was approaching quickly, AR-15 raised, and yelling at us, of course. After he escorted us to our car, still not calmed down, we were out of there!

Most People Would Be Surprised to Know: mayonnaise is the nastiest condiment!!!

Harvesting AI: Faith and Fear in Appraisal

John Valente, Senior Data Research Scientist and Northeast Regional Manager
Tyler Technologies

What are we afraid of regarding AI appraisal? AI provides many opportunities for us to work more efficiently. But if we lack faith in these emerging methodologies, how can we ensure public trust in the valuations? In the past year, I surveyed roughly 1000 assessors in the South, Northeast, and Midwest regarding their faith and fear of AI. After analyzing the results, I discovered that 88% of assessors believe AI appraisal is inevitable while only 12% think they can trust it. At the same time 63% would like to try AI appraisal while 85% believe that telling property owners they are using it would frighten them. To add to the confusion, 64% believe AI appraisal would be very accurate and reliable. This cognitive dissonance would baffle even Freud.

In 2018 IAAO published its "Standard on Automated Valuation Models" which required that AVMs have public trust and transparency. How does our industry move forward to follow these standards if only 12% of us trust it and 85% of us would not tell property owners we are using it? Yet, at the same time, we hope it will help us quickly produce accurate and reliable values. How do we all jump from fear to faith? The simple answer is we must be fully aware when and how we use it.

At this point in our industry, we have tested the efficacy of AI building incredibly quick and powerful models by doing IAAO sales testing. In my article "Can Artificial Intelligence Enhance Your Appraisal Intelligence" published in IAAO's Fair + Equitable (December 2024), I divulged the successful AI results of four case studies undertaken in New England where AI met or exceeded IAAO statistics tests for assessment sales ratio (ASR), coefficient of dispersion (COD), and price related differential (PRD). However, it did fail some price-related bias (PRB) tests indicating a tendency to be regressive. And later this year the IAAO AI task force will publish an article which shows even better statistical test results. However, successful sales tests are not enough for us to assume AI works in all cases. We can't just trust that AI will do all the work for us. We are now called to discern what values we should harvest from AI.

This year, my team and I went beyond sales testing to check AI appraisal for sales chasing and variance against traditional human appraisal -- to discover where it did and did not work. Instead of just looking at AI valuation against sales we analyzed its variance compared to traditional human appraisal. In the end we wanted to determine what outliers it was challenged to appraise.

Our work has revealed its best to use a hybrid AI model with a fixed valuation date using a series of five equally weighted cascading models. MLS data and other real estate sources were used to assist in sales validation. In addition, we used twenty years of outside data plus jurisdiction CAMA data.

We analyzed roughly 262,000 improved residential parcels in New England, Indiana, and Missouri. Using Mann Whitney testing we observed that AI had only an 8% chance of sales chasing whereas some traditional appraisers' sales chased 14% of the time. Our AI models correlated with traditional appraisers' values between 79% to 90% of the time. This produced between 10% to 21% of outliers that needed to be appraised by traditional methods. A greater number of outliers occurred in rural and more heterogeneous markets and showed weaknesses with high-priced and low-priced properties.

We tested an AI model by another data scientist that constantly gathered outside data producing valuation models daily like Zillow. The model suffered from model collapse and yielded only a 64% correlation with traditional appraiser modeling producing 36% outliers.

What have we learned? Clearly, all AI appraisals are not the same. AI appraisals with multiple cascading models stopping at a date of value perform much better than open unending iterative models.

Doing this kind of research helps us gain faith in AI since it identifies the outliers that only skilled appraisers can appraise. AI appraisal will not replace us, but it will enhance our appraisal intelligence and help us focus on the outlier properties that need our careful attention.

Going forward, I recommend we continue to test for variance between AI appraisal and traditional appraisal methods so we can harvest and produce the very best values for our property owners.

This article was based on a presentation at the County Auditors' Association of Ohio entitled "Harvesting AI: A Practitioner's Perspective" delivered by John Valente on June 4, 2025. A summary of the presentation along with the case study statistics and a survey regarding how assessors feel about AI can be found on his LinkedIn page. You can also follow John and his colleague Michael MacFarlane on the podcast "Exploring Appraisal" produced by Tyler Technologies. The podcast will be released later this summer.

Deb Crawford was recently recognized at a luncheon for her nearly thirty years of dedicated service to Tioga County. Deb was issued a citation from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, The House of Representatives noting her exemplary service and commitment to Tioga County over the years.

Congratulations, Deb. Job well done!

Pictured from left to right:

PA State Representative Clint Owlett; Tioga County Commissioner Sam VanLoon; Deb Crawford; Tioga County Commissioner Shane Nickerson; Tioga County Chief Assessor Joshua Zeyn; Tioga County Commissioner Marc Rice; and, Tioga County Assistant Chief Assessor Ken Raymond, Jr.

Deb has also served the AAP well as a board member, past president, chair of various committees and the current co chair of the Clean and Green Committee. She is an invaluable member of the AAP and well-respected by our members and partners. Thank you, Deb, for your service to the Association!

Assessor Safety - Minimizing Risks

Keith Wentz, Director of Risk Management, CCAP

Assessors play an important role in county government operations. The assessment process, as with any county government service, has inherent risks which may present themselves during field work. This article will discuss a few potential risks and provide recommendations on how to best respond.

It is important for the assessor to plan ahead when scheduling visits. In some circumstances, the location you visit may be unfamiliar so it is imperative to gather as much information as possible through discussions with peers or others who are familiar with the location.

- Leave your itinerary with others so they know where you are and where you will be going. Ensure your cell phone is charged and working properly.
- Program important contacts into speed dial so they can be contacted quickly.
- Limit the amount of cash you carry.
- Conceal personal items in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Do not take any unnecessary items and always lock your vehicle.

During every visit, be attentive of your surroundings. Plan to arrive a few minutes ahead of schedule and scope out the area you will be visiting. When parking your vehicle, park in the direction you want to go after completing your visit. Know your most direct exit route.

Determine a place or location to go in the event of an emergency. Be observant of all activities around you. After arriving, attempt to avoid entrance ways or areas where someone could easily hide out of view. Your intuition is vital so trust it.

When approaching the dwelling or building, your body language is critical. Walk with your head up, at a fast pace in a confident manner, always being alert and vigilant. Keep your car keys in your hand for easy access to ensure you can enter your vehicle quickly and safely. Your keys can also be used as a self-defense weapon if needed.

It is possible your visits may become confrontational. If verbally harassed, continue to maintain a professional demeanor. It is important to respond directly, but avoid responding to verbal challenges. Do not get caught up in confrontations, immediately leave the situation. Be aware of what is going on when exiting, as things may have changed from the time of your arrival.

Another potential risk you may encounter during visits is the presence of animals, especially dogs. Be cautious of all animals, even those that are restrained. It is recommended before entering a property to call out/whistle/use your car horn to make your presence known. If after doing so there is no reaction, you'll then be able to continue with your visit.

When knocking or ringing the door bell, continue to be aware of your surroundings. When your client answers the door, ask if they own a dog or other animals. If there is a dog on the premises, ask that the dog be restrained. Or, for the owner to hold the dog if appropriate. Despite your desire to do so, avoid petting a strange dog. If challenged by a dog, don't run, stand still dropping your arms to your side. Don't acknowledge, smile, rattle your keys or make any sudden moves. Wait until the dog loses interest, then slowly back away. In the unfortunate circumstance you are attacked, use your equipment as a shield or a weapon.

Although you hope all visits will go smoothly, you may encounter hostile clients. Some final thoughts and recommendations for consideration include:

- Try to remain calm
- Rehearse what you would say and do in the event a visit goes bad
- Attempt to avoid confronting the client unless absolutely necessary to protect yourself
- If use of force is needed, be reasonable and not excessive
- If properly trained on its use, pepper spray, mace or other repellents can be utilized; however, appropriate training from a certified instructor and written policies and procedures on its use are required
- If a client indicates they have a weapon, assume their statement is true and immediately leave the area
- Seek additional safety recommendations from your local Sheriff's department

Expect the unexpected and anticipate what could go wrong. Talk with management and your peers. Share best practices. The need to implement preventive measures is critical and sharing your experiences will aid in that effort.

Letter to Editor

Continued from page 4

With the wars in Iraq (where I served) and Afghanistan there is a new influx of veterans who qualify for a total and permanent disability rating and the RETX. Our country has not seen this many veterans in need of assistance since the Viet Nam War, which ended 50 years ago, so it may seem higher than usual. Congress has passed the PACT Act quickly to not repeat the injustice that our veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange went through. But this is not a handout to "almost anyone who stepped foot overseas."

The process for a disability rating has three elements: an in-service wound, exposure or injury, a current condition, and a nexus or link between the two. Those service people who return home and are otherwise happy and healthy are not eligible for a rating. Some may have a current condition such as an arthritic hip that needs replacement (me) that is in no way related to my service, I am just getting older.

But there are those who have suffered, or are currently suffering, from exposure to the burns pits we used overseas. The cancers, respiratory disorders and other conditions that are a result of this exposure are no less a result of war as are the wounds from bullets and IEDs, and they need to be treated as such. Soldiers in my unit have suffered from these cancers and deserve our nation's support. The gunner in my vehicle suffered for many years and finally passed away from cancer. I sat two feet away from him on missions, but I am fine. Was his exposure greater because he was in the turret? Was he just more susceptible than I was? I don't know, but I do know that he and his family deserve our support for his sacrifice.

The veteran who was promised his exemption would carry over from Tennessee was done a disservice by the realtor. He should take that up with the local Board of Realtors, because every state has their own rules and regulations and the realtor should have known them. Currently, the Pennsylvania state legislators are working to rectify the wartime vs peacetime difference (HB1257) and in the past year Gov Shapiro has removed the VA compensation from the financial calculations, which shows there is an openness and willingness to update our veterans' programs. It is up to us, both the assessors and veterans, to speak up and be heard on how to make these programs better.

Our legislators can take a second look at how the program is working. Does the program assess the financial need of the veteran effectively? Is there a way to reduce the financial impact of the loss of tax revenue, especially in smaller counties? Is there a way to address the odd situations that might arise?

At our local level there are several things as Assessors and VSOs can do. We need to understand each other's point of view and not dismiss the other's concerns. The two offices must work very closely together so they can develop policies with input from both sides. We must work within our boundaries and our restrictions. We should be able to pick up the phone and know who to speak to if there is an issue.

The Department of Veterans Affairs motto is "to fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors." Those of us in the VA county offices will strive to live up to that standard. The RETX is one tool of ours to do that.

The opinions in this article are strictly the author's and are not those of Lackawanna County, the DMVA or the Department of Veterans Affairs.

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