

# LEO CANTY TESTIMONY

## For Tax Panel Public hearing

September 16, 2015

Good Afternoon, I am Leo Canty, a member of the board of 1000 Friends of CT and I live in Windsor – Last year I submitted testimony urging the legislature to create an entity that would take a serious look at our overall tax structure in CT and seek ways to make it work better. I am delighted it was approved and your report is due in a few short months. I truly hope it finds more success than the long strings of legislative tax structure inquiry that mostly ended with commission reports...

Thank you for allowing me to offer my views on our state's tax structure and the work of this Tax Panel. We'll see if it helps.

It's quite a challenge to make something as unruly, large, complicated, multifaceted, and far reaching as a state tax structure work in an effective and efficient manner. It may not be as much of a challenge to offer a tweak or two here or there and walk away doing some kind of happy dance while the problem still lingers. That happens a lot.

I want to emphasize the large, complex, multifaceted, component of your challenge. Our state with its 169 towns has a complex integrated public service delivery system. Towns rely on the state to do their share of the work and the state counts on the towns to do their jobs. When it works, we all benefit. But it takes a good integration of responsibilities and resources to make it happen. And right now – that integration may not be working at optimum levels, to be descriptively kind.

The state must provide an adequate education for our children. Yet, the towns must fund education mostly with property taxes. The state must be a magnet for talented people, grow jobs and prosperity, but infrastructure to support the magic must come in large part by property taxes. When voters in local communities push back on raising property taxes to pay the bills, as they did in 5 tries in budget referenda in my town, the state ends up shirking its responsibility to all of its citizens, by neglecting some. In CT over 40 % of our overall tax commitment comes from a regressive property tax which may not sustain programs moving forward. Voter pushback is not new. And voters are not wrong in being angry because our unfair system relies too heavily on that tax that never gets fixed....after decades of attempts and happy dances.

By the way – I started my efforts for property tax fairness in 1985.... maybe before I die....

Our property taxes are off the charts my most comparable measures. They are an integral part of an overall tax structure, over used in our unfair, unbalanced system and inadvertently strangling local resources needed to get the job done for our children and future prosperity. What's wrong with us? We should do better. This state has underutilized wealth and resources to meet our challenges.

There should be no question regarding the property tax being a key component of a tax system fix and rebalance and part of the Panel's work and report. Nothing you do will help to solve our problems if you do not deal with a better tuned integrated tax structure that includes property taxes as part of the whole system. So we all can benefit.

Thank you for your time. I pledge to do all I can to support good proposals to make our system work better – in as many 3 minute time blocks as I can....for as long as I can...

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