

DiNapoli: School district tax levy cap 2% for 3rd year

Submitted by the Office of New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli

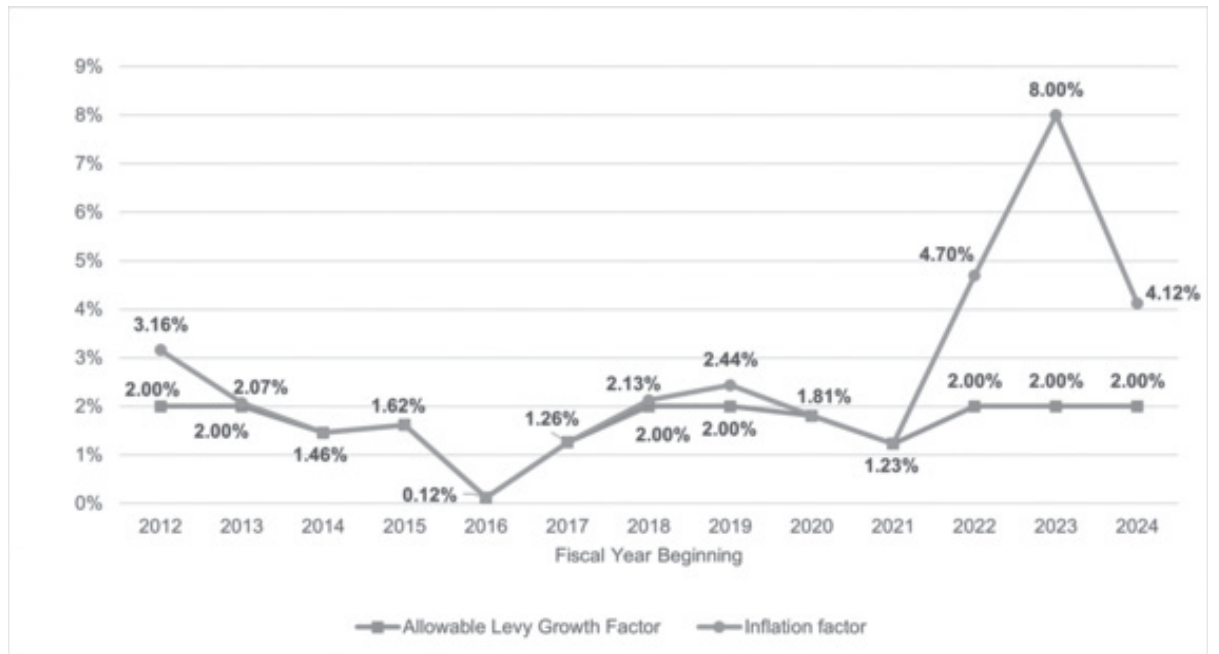
Property tax levy growth for school districts and 10 of the state's cities will be capped at 2%, the same as last year, according to data recently released by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

The tax cap, which first applied to local governments (excluding New York City) and school districts in 2012, limits annual tax levy increases to the lesser of the rate of inflation or 2% with certain exceptions. The law also includes provisions that allow school districts and municipalities to override the cap. DiNapoli's office calculated the inflation factor at 4.12% for those with a June 30, 2025, fiscal year end.

"While inflation continues to decline from recent highs, it remains well above 2%," DiNapoli said. "With one-time pandemic relief aid nearly exhausted, school district and municipal officials should carefully monitor cost growth to effectively manage their budgets and ensure they comply with the tax cap law."

The 2% allowable levy growth affects the tax cap calculations for 676 school districts and 10 cities with fiscal years starting July 1, 2024, including the "Big Four" cities of Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers.

Note: Allowable levy growth factor is expressed as a percentage. The inflation factor is the top line.



NYS: New effort to get more school bus drivers on road

DMV adopts 'under the hood' exemption for commercial driver license road test - allows new bus drivers to take road test without engine compartment portion

Gov. Kathy Hochul announced a plan to remove barriers for prospective school bus drivers applying for a commercial driver license.

Her team stated, "At the governor's direction, the DMV has implemented a federal waiver that allows school bus driver applicants to skip the engine compartment component, also called the 'under the hood' component of the commercial driver license road test. This will make it easier to get a commercial license at a time when school bus drivers are desperately needed, and is the latest in a series of actions directed by Hochul to address the critical shortage of truck and bus drivers."

The governor said, "The job of transporting and caring for our

children is so important, and the need for more drivers throughout New York state is very real. This simple change will encourage more New Yorkers to become school bus drivers - a chance for many to be a positive influence and help support our students, without sacrificing safety."

DMV Commissioner Mark J.F. Schroeder said, "Bus drivers are such an important part of our school system. Not only do they have the incredible responsibility of getting our children to and from school safely, but they're also often the first friendly face a student sees outside of their family as they begin their day. New York state values and appreciates our school bus drivers and hopes this step will help more people qualify to take these jobs and help shape the future of New York's children."

Rep. Joe Morelle said, "It is critical that we address the shortage of school bus drivers to ensure

we can safely transport our children to school. That's why I have worked closely with federal partners at the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to successfully provide a waiver allowing more people to apply for bus driver positions - and I'm thrilled to see New York taking advantage of these resources."

The "under the hood" exemption is allowed by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to help states hire more bus drivers without sacrificing safety, as existing school bus inspection and maintenance standards continue to apply. During the road test, applicants are still required to perform the remaining elements of the commercial driver license vehicle inspection skills test. This new CDL classification, which is set to expire Nov. 27, will restrict licensees to driving only school buses and only in New York state.

Hochul's team offered these

steps interested New Yorkers can take to get a school-bus-only CDL:

- ✓ First, one must have a New York state driver license (class D, class E, or non-CDL C);
- ✓ Study the New York state commercial driver's manual;
- ✓ Apply for a commercial learner permit (CLP) at a DMV office. One must pass a written knowledge test to receive a CDL permit with the school bus and passenger endorsements;
- ✓ Schedule entry-level driver training. Read the entry level driver training (ELDT) FAQ for more information;
- ✓ Prepare for the road test and practice with a supervising driver;
- ✓ Schedule your "limited school bus" road test (online or by calling the DMV contact center);
- ✓ Pass the "limited school bus" road test;
- ✓ Go to a DMV office to amend a license to reflect "S1" (school bus only) and "K" (intrastate

only) restrictions.

At the governor's direction, in 2022, the DMV launched a program authorizing third parties to conduct commercial road tests, which has "significantly increased the capacity for these types of road tests statewide. There are currently 27 third-party entities conducting commercial driver license road tests throughout the state. In addition, through cooperation with county-operated DMV offices, the state also increased testing capacity for written commercial permit exams across the state."

Ash Wednesday retreat day at Stella Niagara's Center of Renewal

Jan. 31 is the final preregistration deadline for Stella Niagara's Center of Renewal Ash Wednesday retreat day on Feb. 14.

Organizers said, "All in the Western New York community are invited to begin the Lenten season by participating in meaningful, values-based Ash Wednesday retreat-workshop, which will begin with check-in and morning

coffee at 9 a.m., ending at 4 p.m. Distribution of ashes by Sr. Pat McMahon, OSF, and lunch will also be provided."

Facilitated by Nancy P. Askins, Ph.D., executive director of the Center of Renewal, the retreat will include discussions, music, contemplative time, and multiple choices of reflective values-based activities designed to help

retreatants prepare to enter the six weeks of Lent in a meaningful manner.

Advance reservations are required by 5 p.m. Jan. 31. No late reservations will be accepted due to multiple logistics limitations. For additional details or to pre-

register, call 716-754-7376, ext. 1.

Located on River Road, the Center of Renewal Retreat & Conference Center at Stella Niagara is sponsored by the Sisters of Saint Francis of Penance and Christian Charity, Holy Name Province.



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Handling winter's cold

If your winter plans include cold weather sports and activities, remember that winter sports demand that you be in shape. Just walking outside in freezing cold can intensify older joint problems if you don't take the proper precautions to bundle up. In cold weather, muscles and blood vessels contract to conserve body heat. This results in reduced blood supply to the extremities. If you are out of shape, you will be the first to notice many muscles functioning at a significantly lower capacity. To help the body meet this challenge, try warming up and stretching before heading out into the cold. Focus on lower back muscles, hamstrings, and calf muscles. Don't forget to stretch when you are finished exercising too.

If you must shovel snow, bend your knees and let your legs and arms do the work. Lift small amounts at one time. Should you sprain your back, you most likely have also misaligned your spine as well. Chiropractic is the treatment of choice for a fast and effective recovery.

Remember to drink more water, at least a quart and a half a day as with the drier winter air many people get dehydrated. Many symptoms of common ailments can be signs of dehydration. So if you feel ill or have aches, pains, headaches, dry skin, digestive troubles and have not been drinking enough water, this is a good place to start.

Rose Chiropractic, P.C. located at 435 Ridge St., Lewiston, is a natural health care practice focusing on health improvement through Nutrition Response TestingSM and chiropractic. New patients are welcome. Call (716)754-9039

HELP WANTED

Busy editorial department covering Erie and Niagara counties has an opening for an outside freelance writer. Position entails government reporting at town, village and/or school board meetings; other reporting assignments in our coverage areas and the preparation of news copy for our respective news products and website. Candidate must be dependable; have strong writing skills; and the ability to work and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment.

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TOWN OF WHEATFIELD 2024

Town/County Tax Notice

NOTICE OF RECEIPT OF TAX ROLL AND WARRANT

PAYMENTS CAN BE MADE AS FOLLOWS:

Mail Payments to: Kathleen Harrington-McDonell, Town Clerk
2800 Church Road
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

Pay in Person: Wheatfield Town Hall, Town Clerk
2800 Church Road
Mon-Fri 8:00 am - 4:00 pm
Wed- 8:00 am - 6:30 pm January only

There is a drop box located at Town Hall for your convenience

Pay online at www.wheatfield.ny.us

Payments can no longer be made at the bank

LAST DAY TO PAY WITHOUT PENALTY IS January 31, 2024

All Taxes received after such date, there shall be added interest of 1% to 02/29/24 and 2% to 04/01/24, after such date all County Taxes are payable to the county Treasurer with 5% penalty and interest calculated at a rate of 1% per month on the tax and penalty.