

## **NJTA Historical Overview**

Formerly The Silver Brigade, NJTA evolved from a group of concerned citizens who came together initially in 2000 to formally oppose the out of control property tax increases rampant throughout the State of New Jersey. Since 2004, the organization has expanded on the original mission, now taking a very aggressive role in addressing the overall tax issue and the fiscal irresponsibility and mismanagement that has historically plagued our State.

## **NJTA Goals, Activities and Accomplishments to Date**

### ***Overview of Silver Brigade Goals/Accomplishments***

In early 2004, as part of the group's reorganization process, The Silver Brigade formalized its meeting schedules, created formal meeting agendas and established and identified three specific annual goals for the organization.

The first year's (2004) goals were:

- 1) To formulate The Silver Brigade Legislation Bill Proposal to address the property tax issue and submit it to the State Legislature along with bi-partisan sponsorship;*
- 2) Define and raise the level of citizen awareness of the key issues involved in property tax reform; and*
- 3) Increase The Silver Brigade membership throughout the state.*

### **Accomplishments:**

- #1 was accomplished from the perspective that the group formulated its formal 10-Point Legislative Proposals Platform document and sent it out to the bi-partisan political leadership. A hard copy was hand delivered to the Senate President and then Acting Governor Codey's West Orange office.
- #2 was accomplished by garnering wide-spread media attention. Key political figures were invited to speak including US Attorney Chris Christie, a Morris County resident and former Freeholder. News 12 NJ, Star Ledger, Bergen Record, Daily Record and various local publications began on-going coverage of the group's activities.
- #3 also was accomplished as the Silver Brigade closed out FY 2004 with 80 paid members -- up from approx 35 at the beginning of the year.

2005's goals:

- 1) To meet with Governor Codey to discuss the Silver Brigade's mission and goals.*
- 2) Expand the group's presence via engagements with other similar-like groups dedicated to property tax reform.*
- 3) To create a Silver Brigade web-site*

## **Accomplishments:**

- #1, while the Governor avoided an actual face-to-face meeting, the group did meet with his chief of staff both in West Orange and Trenton. Additionally, the Governor sent a personal representative to speak with The Silver Brigade membership; describing the administration's property tax stance at the time (Dec. 2005)
- #2, was accomplished via a series of presentations made to:
  - Friends of St. Francis Home in Denville,
  - Partnership for Property Tax Reform in Paramus and
  - The Randolph, NJ Seniors
  - In addition, The Silver Brigade held three Candidates' Forums and drove attendance via announcements to the State and regional press
    - Republican Gubernatorial Candidates in June 2005 (6 of the 7 candidates)
    - Morris County Assembly Candidates (we had 16 of the 20 candidates in attendance)
    - Morris County Freeholder Candidates (both candidates attended)
- #3, [www.silverbrigade.com](http://www.silverbrigade.com) went live in May 2005

2006's goals:

- 1) *To establish a Trustee Committee Structure to better expand the organization's programs.*
- 2) *To Host three Statewide Citizens' Tax Summits*
- 3) *Continue to grow the membership and spread the message across the state.*

## **Accomplishments:**

- #1, The Silver Brigade established a special events committee headed by two of its newest trustees. The events included a series of "Tea Parties" and hospitality events that were dedicated to engaging and partnering with similar-like organizations around the State and to drive new membership.
- #2, thus far the organization has held two of the targeted three events.
  - The first Summit was held on May13, at the Morris County Cultural Center where bi-partisan representatives from the NJ Senate and Assembly, League of Municipalities, NJ Chamber of Commerce and several Mayors convened to address the State's out-of-control tax situation.
  - The second regional event, held at the Randolph HS Auditorium, included a Morris County mayor, council president, candidate for county executive (former Bergen County Freeholder) and a former council member from Gloucester Township (Camden County).
  - The third event, originally planned for QTR4 06, has been re-scheduled as part of 2007's special events calendar.

- #3, again the organization continued to expand its membership, which included new members from Bergen, Sussex, Warren, Hunterdon, Morris, Middlesex and Camden Counties.
  - In addition, The Silver Brigade formed its first separate chapter in Pequannock (northern most Morris County) and is now targeting the creation of new chapters in Bergen, Warren, Monmouth and Camden Counties.
  - Several trustees met with the bi-partisan NJ Legislative leadership (Sen. Codey, Speaker Roberts, Sen. Lance and Asm. DeCroce), as well as Governor Corzine to move the organization's 10-Point Legislative Proposals Platform forward and have had it formally endorsed by Parsippany and Rockaway Township Town Councils.
  - The Silver Brigade has presented before a variety of local civic groups, including: Fox Hills, Adult Community, Rockaway Glen Rock Activities Club, Glen Rock South Jersey Citizens for Property Tax Reform, Cherry Hill Bergen County Senior Citizens Coordinating Council/Coalition for Tax Reform, Paramus
  - In 2006, The Silver Brigade exhibited at the following State events: Bergen County Seniors' Picnic (2,000 attendees) Warren County Senior Expo (1200 attendees) NJ League of Municipalities (Nov. 16 in Atlantic City)
  - On November 2, the organization held its first formal "Tea Party" event at a commercial tea room in Roxbury, NJ drawing attendees from around Morris, Bergen and Passaic counties. That same evening, the Silver Brigade hosted its 2006 Morris County Freeholder Candidates' Forum at Randolph Middle School.
  - The Silver Brigade was featured in the NY Times, Star-Ledger, Courier Post, Bergen Record, Asbury Park Press, Philadelphia Inquirer, (along with a host of various local news publications in Morris, Bergen, Sussex, Warren, Passaic and Camden counties) WCBS-TV2, and on the National Taxpayers' Union website.
  - Membership (paid) rose to just over 100 by year end and is expected to approach 150+ with the additions of the Pequannock Chapter.

As we view 2007 as a watershed period for New Jersey tax reform (all 120 Legislature seats are up for election) our goals for this year take on added significance.

2007's goals:

- 1) *To upgrade the organization's image in order to better meet the new, expanded mission. Change the name to address the perception that the organization is a Morris County-based group of senior citizens focusing exclusively on property tax reform*
- 2) *To design a new website reflective of #1*
- 3) *To introduce a series of educational initiatives designed to prepare NJ voters for the upcoming election in November*
- 4) *To spread the message across the state via a multi-media campaign*
- 5) *To continue to grow the membership by creating additional regional chapters*

## **Accomplishments:**

- #1 was accomplished as of April 11, 2007
- #2 was accomplished as of May 21, 2007 with the launch of [www.njtaxes.org](http://www.njtaxes.org)
- #3, 4 and 5 will be an on-going endeavor, as with past years, but thus far:
  - On May 9, NJTA President Jerry Cantrell taped two media segments for Comcast, CH 8, TV. The segments are scheduled to air in the May/June time period.
  - On May 29<sup>th</sup>, several activists from Monmouth County will host a meeting at the Middletown Public Library where Cantrell will be the featured speaker. The intent of this meeting will serve as the kick-off for the Monmouth County Chapter.
  - Although not scheduled yet, it is intended that 1-2 more like events will be scheduled in the coming months, one in the northern half of the state and the other in the southern half.
  - A state-wide Tax Summit will be scheduled in September similar to those hosted in 2006.
  - Similarly, several (1-3) county legislative candidates' forums will be hosted around the state, one in Morris County, in October/November. Assuming the formation of the Monmouth County Chapter, one will be held there as well.