

Editorial Page



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Facts show why state can't keep upping taxes

State lawmakers – mostly Republicans – who have been holding out for a better state budget with no increases in taxes have been getting bludgeoned pretty hard in the past few weeks.

But consider for a moment where Pennsylvania already stands in the tax standings.

This year Pennsylvanians worked until April 14 just to pay their tax bill. That is the 11th latest among the country's 50 states.

Federal, state and local taxes consume 28.5 percent of Pennsylvanians' income, 41 percent if the federal deficit spending is added to the mix.

Pennsylvanians pay an average \$4,463 per capita in state and local taxes, spending more on taxes than they do on food, clothing and housing combined, according to the nonpartisan Commonwealth Foundation.

Pennsylvania ranks in the top 20 in state and local taxes, spending, property taxes, income taxes, corporate taxes and debt per capita. The top 20 in all of them.

You may have guessed by now that heavy state spending is the culprit. You would be correct. Under Gov. Ed Rendell, Pennsylvania's debt obligation has increased from \$6.8 billion to \$9.5 billion in the 2009-10 budget proposal, a 40 percent increase in seven years. Annual payments on bonds have been increased 250 percent since Rendell took office.

So, it's easy for the governor and everyone he has deputized to paint the no-tax-increase hold-outs as Scrooge. But the facts say it is time to focus not on how much the state spends, but on how it spends it. Clearly, spending on all things within the realm of state government – many of which don't belong there – has been increased plenty during Rendell's time in office.

Poor choices have been made by the governor and support far too often by his old-boy network in the Legislature. The result is that now harder decisions need to be made so that the programs and services that are worthy of state support can be preserved.