



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Elaine Phillips

## Senator Phillips & Receiver of Taxes Clavin: “Stop Playing Politics with STAR Tax Credit Checks”

ELAINE PHILLIPS September 25, 2018



Senator Elaine Phillips and Hempstead Town Receiver of Taxes Don Clavin today responded forcefully to a report which showed that New York State mailed STAR (School Tax Relief) rebate checks far earlier than usual to homeowners who resided in New York City and eight counties that comprise the highest total percent of the vote in Democrat Primaries. The state-sponsored school tax relief checks, which have traditionally gone out in September and October, arrived weeks before the Democrat Gubernatorial Primary while Republican leaning counties, such as Suffolk, are not slated to receive checks until the end of the year.

The Senator and Receiver decried the political “game playing” that was affecting the timing of STAR credit checks. The officials also called for a change in the way which the STAR school tax relief monies are distributed to taxpayers to ensure that politics will never again influence when homeowners would receive STAR tax credits.

“Now is the time to return the STAR Program fully to a property tax exemption, providing real school tax relief to property owners on the basis of school tax collection periods, not based on political campaigns and elections,” stated Phillips. “Returning the program to a completely property tax exemption-based program will take politics out of the process.”

Senator Phillips plans to sponsor legislation that would amend the STAR Program, restoring the tax relief initiative completely to a property tax exemption program for all eligible property owners as it functioned prior to 2015. In fact, the STAR Program used to provide a tax break to qualifying property owners in the form of a property tax exemption, which effectively reduced the school property tax bill for participating homeowners. Subsequently, a decision was made to amend the program for all new applicants, replete with STAR credit checks being sent directly to this newer group of homeowners in lieu of the property tax exemption. The bifurcation of how these two groups of taxpayers are handled, which provides property owners who purchased their properties prior to 2015 receiving a tax exemption and newer property owners (those who purchased properties after 2015) receiving a tax credit check, has resulted in confusion and complaints of politics playing a role in the manner in which tax relief monies are disbursed

“The School Tax Relief (STAR) Program was instituted in New York State to provide property tax relief for homeowners in the face of steadily rising local school district property taxes,” said Clavin. “The program is now being subverted to curry favor with voters in primary elections, a clear violation of the program’s intent. This action is outrageous, and I am taking steps, along with Senator Phillips, to change the way in which STAR relief is provided to

homeowners so that politics will never again play a role in the process.”

“I want to thank Senator Elaine Phillips for taking the lead to remove politics from the tax relief policies in our state,” concluded Clavin. “The time has come to put people ahead of politics.”