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BURZICHELLI/MILAM/ALBANO BILL PROTECTING PRIVACY OF PROPERTY TAXPAYERS ADVANCES

Bill Would Shield Personal Information on Property Tax Records From Public View

(TRENTON) – An Assembly panel today released legislation Assemblymen John Burzichelli, Matt Milam and Nelson Albano sponsored to protect the personal privacy of homeowners by requiring removal of certain property tax deduction and credit information from property tax bills made available for public review.

The measure aims to mitigate some of the privacy concerns that have slowed efforts to provide property tax relief through a direct credit on the tax bill, as opposed to a rebate check.

“There is no doubt we can vastly improve upon the clumsy and oft-derided way the state provides property tax relief,” said Burzichelli (D-Gloucester). “Alleviating the litany of personal privacy issues that have stymied efforts to shift from rebate checks to direct credits will allow us to move more quickly to a system that is cheaper to run and more beneficial to taxpayers.”

Currently, property taxpayers must first pay their entire property tax bills before receiving a rebate check. Attempts to move to a system of direct credits that would lower the amount of property taxes paid have been stymied by fears that a review of property tax documents could reveal homeowner’s personal income and other private information.

“Property taxpayers deserve a simplified way to save on their taxes that protects their personal data from becoming public record,” said Milam (D-Cumberland/Atlantic/Cape May). “If we are ever going to move away from rebates, we need to take this step.”

The measure (A-3308) would require the deletion of any information on a homeowner’s property tax bill that could be used to determine the taxpayer’s income or age, or whether the homeowner suffers from any disability. State, county and municipal tax officials would need to remove such information from any documents made publicly available.

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The sponsors noted the state spends upwards of \$10 million annually just to print and mail rebate checks to qualifying property taxpayers.

“The current rebate program is clunky and expensive and needs to be replaced with a simpler, more effective system of credits,” said Albano (D-Cumberland/Atlantic/Cape May). “Providing an easier way to deliver property tax relief and protect homeowner privacy is a win-win.”

The Assembly Housing and Local Government Committee released the measure 5-0 with one abstention. It now heads to the Assembly Speaker, who decides if and when to post it for a floor vote.

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