

Jennie Quin Colabella, Taxpayers for a Better Highland

My name is Jennie Quin Colabella. I'm a freelance broadcaster, home educator, and taxpayer in the Highland Central School District. I represent the Taxpayers for a Better Highland.

Taxpayers for a Better Highland is a grassroots organization which represents many property taxpayers in the Highland Central School District (HCSD). Many of our residents are being taxed out of their homes and our community by high property taxes. The 2% Tax Cap was a helpful first step to get spiraling costs under control, but more needs to be done so communities can gain the control to make necessary, lasting changes at the local level. We thank the Education Commission for the opportunity to speak on today's panel about an ethics issue that is core to our states systemic educational problems and out of control spending and needs to be addressed:

**What is our problem:**

Currently there is no law or ethics ruling in the State of New York which prohibits NYS Teachers, local or neighboring school district employees, and their spouses from serving on local school boards. When such a person is elected as a trustee, a clear conflict of interest is present during contract negotiations and tenure votes.

**Why it's a problem:**

Our district, Highland Central School District, currently has seven (7) members, five (5) of whom are spouses of teachers, are administrators of a local school district, or work directly for the Highland school district. We believe that the Highland Teachers Association (teachers' union) will have an unfair advantage over the community during contract negotiations because of these ties.

**What can be done:**

We ask that New York State pass a law forbidding community members with such ties from being elected and serving as School Board Trustees.

Regards,  
Taxpayers for a Better Highland  
Jennie Quin Colabella  
Jill Indelicato  
Frank Gucciardo  
John Gorden