

OPINION

"Maybe the most important contribution journalists can make to our survival is to teach humanness, empathy and integrity in our newsrooms and classrooms."

Nancy Maynard

former newspaper publisher, 1994

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MORRIS NEWSBEE

Making Pay-to-play work for all

Local anti-pay to play law will reduce taxpayer costs.

In Morris Township, a debate has been taking place for months over whether and what form local Public Contracting Reform, or Anti-Pay to Play Law should take.

Pay To Play affects every town, no matter how well run, and every taxpayer.

Here's some of what everyone needs to know.

Your local tax dollars are being wasted.

You, the taxpayer, are unknowingly supporting a process called "Pay to Play" which raises the price your town pays for some of its contracted professionals such as attorneys, auditors and engineers.

This inflated price might also be buying your town second-rate professional services at a first rate price level.

So, how does Pay to Play operate?

Current State law has loopholes that allow professionals to legal-

ly make political contributions in exchange for business.

Contractors can bypass direct contribution restrictions by "wheeling" or doing an end run with their campaign contributions.

They do this by sending them first to county level political organizations, which turn them around and send them back to local politicians.

These same politicians award and oversee local professional services contracts.

Political contributions become a "cost of doing business" or overhead.

They find their way into the price to pay for professional services.

**Ronald
Goldberg**

COMMENTARY



The writer, a resident of Morris Township, is a Democratic Morris Township Committeeman in the third year of his first three-year term.

At the same time, wheeled contributions create a conflict of interest, an ethical conflict, for contract-awarding elected officials.

But politicians are very dependent on this campaign contribution scheme and resist any change that would eliminate or greatly reduce their contributions.

You will hear politicians praise public contracting reform and at the same time introduce laws which sustain Pay to Play practices such as wheeling.

To save tax dollars in these difficult economic times taxpayers should insist that your local governing body enact a public

contracting reform or anti-Pay to Play law. Municipalities have limited but clear authority in this area.

They are enabled by state statute to make laws which keep campaign contributions from influencing the award of contracts.

However, these local laws must confine themselves to the process for purchase of goods and services.

They can and should go further than current state law in regulating political contributions from professionals who must not be allowed to buy the business.

And new laws must eliminate wheeling, that end run used by contractors and politicians to "get the money".

It's about the money. It's time for you to speak up to protect your wallet.

Tell your local elected officials to get their campaign money from some other place, not from your tax dollars.