

Extend Federal Property Tax Relief (The Hill Blog)

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American homeowners continue to face rising property taxes, placing significant burden on them during this recession. Yet, while recent statistics indicate that there are 72.3 million owner-occupied households in the United States, only 40.5 million of them claim an itemized deduction for real estate property taxes. That means that more than 30 million American homeowners do not receive property tax relief. To me, that's not right.

To provide assistance to homeowners who do not itemize, in 2007 I helped pass a property tax relief initiative. Under the law, single-filing property-owning taxpayers are able to take an additional deduction of \$500 and joint-filers can deduct \$1,000 from their tax returns. In my home state of New Jersey, where property taxes paid annually per person are the highest in the nation, I have heard from many families who have benefited from this relief. Because the deduction is available only for the 2008 and 2009 tax years, I have introduced legislation to extend this successful relief initiative for another five years.

Property taxes are set by local governments, and there's not much that we in Congress can do to lower them. However, this new deduction is providing relief to those less likely to itemize on their taxes, including seniors. We should extend this initiative to ensure that these homeowners can continue to benefit.