

## OPINION

Carl Golden

Tucked away in "Path to Progress," the report and brainchild of Senate President Stephen Sweeney to fundamentally change the state's revenue producing and spending structure, is a carefully worded idea that emerges from time to time in discussions of New Jersey's record-breaking property tax.

In the section entitled "State and Local Government Tax Structure," the following paragraph appears:

The 2 percent cap on property tax increases has restrained the rate of growth but slowing annual increases, while helpful, has neither reversed the trend nor reduced the burden. In a growing number of municipalities, the annual property tax bill is well in excess of five figures, for example.

Some 1,200 government entities -- 565 municipalities, 21 counties and 600 school districts -- rely on property taxes for everything from crayons for kindergarteners to weaponry for police departments.

Municipal consolidation has never taken hold and likely never will to any serious extent, and shared service agreements -- while a growing trend -- have not resulted in appreciable tax savings.

Gov. Phil Murphy has been largely neutral on the Path to Progress report, saying only that he'd be willing to discuss it at greater length at some point.

Sweeney