



PROVIDENCE, RI— RESEARCHED BY PPL OF PVD

# Information About Tax Hikes and City Finances

## The Mayor's Plan for Tax Hikes, Assessment Hikes, School Defunding, City Service Cuts, and Our Plan to Push Back

When Mayor Brett Smiley and purportedly progressive City Council took office in 2023, they had a clear path forward. Mayor Jorge Elorza had resolved the state's lawsuit and the city was expected to increase school funding to come in accordance with the Crowley Act, which *legally obligates the city of Providence to increase its support of PPSD proportionate to RIDE's financial support of public schools statewide*. In addition to being required under the law, the expected \$18m boost would help PPSD recuperate after the loss of federal COVID funds, and rapid inflation. **Smiley threw that plan out the window and ignored the Crowley Act.** Our City Council stood by and applauded.

Instead of funding schools as the **law required at \$148 million, Smiley only budgeted \$130 million, a drastic underfunding.** The following year, when the law required \$157 million, Smiley again proposed just \$133 million, and the City Council nudged it up to \$135.5 million. City leaders **left schools with a \$21.5 million funding gap**—on paper. In reality, **with inflation, our schools are being defunded even more.**

While teachers are doing more with less, police salaries have been boosted by over 10%. Mayor Smiley has eagerly prioritized police funding over public education. **Under Smiley, police spending has increased significantly,** including spending \$350,000 on an armored personnel carrier. **This isn't about public safety.** Over-policing disproportionately harms working-class communities and communities of color, criminalizing poverty while stripping neighborhoods of the resources they actually need. **Gutting schools while inflating police budgets is a textbook conservative move**—reactionary, regressive, and a clear statement about whose future this administration values.

While pointing to the schools as the cause of a claimed budget shortfall, City Council President Rachel Miller and Mayor Brett Smiley have **handed out millions in tax breaks** to luxury housing. TSAs **let luxury developers and renters pay even less in taxes.**

**Affordable housing funding has already been a casualty of this fight.** In order to fund the schools in accordance with the RIDE settlement, Smiley refused to use the city's \$25m rainy day fund, and instead steered money intended for affordable housing to settle the lawsuit he caused. **Right before the ARPA ordinance passed, the Council removed \$4.4m for affordable housing to help pay the settlement.**

Instead of rolling any of these deals back, Smiley and the Council are blaming the budget gap on “discretionary spending.” **According to Smiley, libraries, rec centers, and PVD Fest are where we should be making cuts**, not the Mayor’s \$4 million plan to rip out a bike lane next to the city’s most popular park.

Let’s be clear: **libraries and recreation centers aren’t nice-to-haves, they are what tax revenue should be spent on**. Public spaces, public services, and public schools make a city livable. They are also what attracts investment, growth, and development.

Smiley and Miller want you to believe the problem is the schools, when it’s really quiet tax breaks for businesses. Now, **they’re proposing an UNCAPPED tax hike (possibly over 8%)—not to fix school funding, but to keep up their tax cuts, police expansions, and PR budgets. This cost will be passed onto to renters as well.**

**Assessment costs are skyrocketing for some residents.** Some homeowners have reported **massive assessment increases** that will further drive their property taxes through the roof. However, across the city, commercial properties and developments are often assessed at a fraction of their market value. This creates an effective tax break for those for-profit properties. To one protection you’re afforded? You have the right to challenge your assessment until March 7th, 2025. You can find more information below.

These tax hikes won’t hit the institutions that City Leaders protect—not with their TSAs, PILOT deals, and decades of rigged property assessments. **They’ll hit you.** This tax hike is a choice. And if Smiley and the City Council go through with it, **they should expect to see accountability at the ballot box.**

## Do you Want to File an Appeal on Your Property's Assessment? Your State Representatives Can Help:

You can simply give them your information and tell them that you need help filing an appeal on your property tax assessment. You have until March 7th, 2025 to start this process.

Representative Edith Ajello, East Side — (401) 274-7078

Representative Chris Blazejewski, Fox Point/Downcity/Providence PI — (401) 484-8814

Representative Nathan Biah, Wanskuck/Charles/Smith Hill — (401) 241-9391

Representative Rebecca Kislak, Hope/Blackstone — (401) 400-2338

Representative Anthony DeSimone, PC/Wanskuck/Charles — (401) 580-7316

Representative Raymond Hull, Manson/Dyerville/Mt. Pleasant — (401) 272-4026

Representative David Morales Mt. Pleasant/Elmhurst — (401) 480-1322

Representative John Lombardi, Federal Hill/Valley — (401) 404-4700

Representative Enrique Sanchez, West End/Olneyville — (401) 753-8114

Representative Scott Slater, West End/Reservoir/South Elmwood — (401) 741-7641

Representative Grace Diaz, Elmwood/South Providence — (401) 575-3641

Representative Jose Batista, Washington Park/South Providence — (401) 533-2226

Representative Ramon Perez, Silver Lake/Olneyville — (401) 301-6599

If your State Representative is unable to assist you or inaccessible, contact your State Senator  
(information in panel below)

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## Contact Your Representatives!

Proposed tax hikes have not yet been approved and you can play a real role in preventing the worst outcome by calling the mayor, your city councilor, state rep., and state senator using our script:

"Hello my name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I live on \_\_\_\_\_ Street/Road in the \_\_\_\_\_ neighborhood of Providence. I am calling to demand that the 4% cap on property tax increases remains in-place. I also demand that essential services like libraries and recreation centers remain untouched, and that public schools get the funding they deserve. It is time for City and State leaders to prioritize the people that live here. No tax breaks for luxury housing. Raise taxes for wealthier homeowners and reduce expensive over-policing. I will be telling everyone in my community about this, and I will be voting accordingly."

### Call the Mayor:

Mayor Brett Smiley – (401) 680-5000 [official line]

### Contact your City Councilor:

Please also include "I demand that the City Council pass a resolution also opposing the Mayor's request for no cap on property taxes" in your call. This makes a big difference.

Council President Rachel Miller – (401) 338-0134

City Council Call Line: – (401) 521-7477

### How to Contact your State Reps. And Senators:

It's important to call even if they agree with you, because they can use your call as evidence of opposition.

State Reps are listed in the box above.

Senator Bissallion (Fox Point/College Hill) – (401) 442-6973

Senator Quezada (South Providence and Elmwood) – (401) 255-0345

Senator Zurier (East Side, Blackstone, and Wayland) – (401) 644-0925

Senator Ruggerio (Elmhurst and Wanskuck) – (401) 222-3310

Senator Bell (Mt. Pleasant and West End) – (401) 680-0725

Senator Mack (Hope, West End and South Providence) – (401) 288-1288

Senator Ciccone (Charles and Elmhurst) – (401) 275-0949