



Research Summary

Pennsylvania Economy League

CENTRAL DIVISION

June 2000

Lackawanna County

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL REAL ESTATE TAX LEVIES FOR 2000 RISE BY 5.0 PERCENT SINCE LAST YEAR AND BY 25.4 PERCENT IN THE PAST FIVE YEARS

The gross real estate tax levy for the year 2000 for Lackawanna County, the cities of Carbondale and Scranton, and the county's boroughs and townships totals \$57,591,583 which is \$2,742,484 or 5.0 percent higher than in 1999. (The gross real estate tax levy is the potential tax yield based on millages and certified taxable valuations; it is not necessarily the amount of real estate tax revenues budgeted by jurisdictions or the amount which they expect to receive.)

Lackawanna County's real estate tax levy increased by \$200,997 or 0.6 percent between 1999 and 2000 to \$33,526,520. Real estate tax levies also rose in 27 of the county's 40 municipalities, they declined in 11, and in two (Blakely and Taylor boroughs) there were no real estate taxes in 1999 and 2000. The largest absolute increase in real estate tax levy since last year among the county's municipalities occurred in Scranton City (\$2,045,187); the largest proportionate increase was in Roaring Brook township (27.1 percent). The decreases in real estate tax levies ranged from \$108 in Vandling Borough to \$7,203 in Carbondale City and from 0.1 percent in Dalton Borough to 5.6 percent in Throop Borough. (See Exhibit I.)

In addition to new construction, demolitions, and the natural appreciation and depreciation of properties which can influence the change in the assessed valuation of a county and its municipalities from year to year (and, in conjunction with the real estate tax millage, perhaps the tax levy as well), assessed valuations and tax levies in Lackawanna County for the year 2000 have been influenced by several significant events. These include the deregulation of public utilities in the Commonwealth (and the resulting shift in properties from tax-exempt to taxable status); changes in Pennsylvania's "Clean and Green" legislation (which expands the eligibility for preferential assessment to include farm property previously excluded from consideration for tax exemption); and the implementation of Pennsylvania's Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) program (which is designed to encourage businesses and individuals to remain in or to move into these designated areas by providing tax incentives including exemption from real estate taxation).

The deregulation of utilities has increased the certified assessed valuation and tax levy countywide and in some municipalities, but, as a byproduct of deregulation, all jurisdictions will experience a loss in revenue from the state as part of the Public Utility Realty Tax (PURTA) program. Conversely, the change in the "Clean and Green" legislation and the new KOZ program have reduced the assessed valuation and possibly the tax levy in some municipalities and the county

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in the “Clean and Green” legislation and the new KOZ program have reduced the assessed valuation and possibly the tax levy in some municipalities and the county as a whole. While the specific impacts of these factors differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, combined, they have had a noticeable effect on the total certified value of taxable property and tax levies in Lackawanna County for the year 2000.

For the five-year period beginning in 1995, the combined real estate tax levy of the county and its 40 municipalities rose by \$11,665,821 or 25.4 percent. Lackawanna County’s real estate tax levy increased by \$7,463,417 or 28.6 percent. During this period levies also rose in 30 municipalities, they decreased in eight, and in Blakely and Taylor boroughs there were no real estate taxes in 1995 or 2000. The largest dollar increases in tax levy among the county’s municipalities for the five-year period were in Scranton City (\$2,963,167) and Dunmore Borough (\$547,652); the largest proportionate increases were experienced in Moosic Borough (73.5 percent) and Spring Brook Township (152.8 percent). The decreases during this period occurred in Carbondale City (\$5,492 or 0.5 percent), in the boroughs of Clarks Green (\$572 or 0.4 percent), Clarks Summit (\$127,012 or 18.2 percent), Dalton (\$26,743 or 13.7 percent), and Throop (\$110,664 or 53.4 percent), and in the townships of Benton (\$70 or 0.1 percent), Fell (\$54,268 or 41.4 percent), and Newton (\$19,958 or 8.5 percent).

Real estate tax levies for the year 2000 in Lackawanna County’s boroughs total \$7,149,741 and range from \$40,935 in Vandling to \$2,297,023 in Dunmore; the levies in the townships total \$2,975,292 and range from \$4,284 in West Abington to \$556,393 in South Abington. The tax levies in the boroughs rose by \$373,488 or 5.5 percent over 2000 and by \$874,282 or 13.9 percent over 1995. Levies in the townships during these two periods of time increased by \$130,015 or 4.6 percent and \$370,447 or 14.2 percent, respectively.

Scranton City’s real estate tax levy for the year 2000—based on the city’s millage rates and certified county assessment figures—is \$12,917,681, up by \$2,045,187 or 18.8 percent from last year. Scranton, unlike the county’s other municipalities, levies separate tax rates on the land value and improvements value of each property. The tax levy on land increased by \$1,240,250 or 18.5 percent; the levy on improvements rose by \$804,937 or 19.2 percent. Carbondale City’s real estate tax levy for the year 2000 is \$1,022,349, down by \$7,203 or 0.7 percent from last year.

For the five-year period beginning in 1995, the real estate tax levy in Scranton increased by \$2,963,167 or 29.8 percent, Carbondale’s real estate tax levy decreased by \$5,492 or 0.5 percent.

Real estate tax millages for general purposes (and for special purposes if levied throughout the jurisdiction) increased in six of the county’s 40 municipalities between 1999 and 2000 and remained unchanged in 34. The millage increases occurred in Scranton City (the rate on land increased by 13.12 mills or 19.0 percent; the rate on improvements increased by 2.86 mills or 19.1 percent), in Dunmore Borough (3.50 mills or 14.1 percent), and in the townships of Abington (0.50 mill or 4.7 percent), Covington (1.00 mill or 10.8 percent), Roaring Brook (2.00 mills or 26.7 percent), and Scott (0.50 mill or 7.1 percent). (See Exhibit I.)

Lackawanna County's year 2000 real estate millage remained unchanged at 25.7293 mills. Scranton City's year 2000 tax rates on land and improvements increased to 82.1220 mills and 17.8610 mills, respectively. Carbondale City's year 2000 tax rate is the same as last year (24.97 mills).

For the five-year period beginning in 1995, general purpose real estate tax millages increased in 11 municipalities, decreased in eight, and remained unchanged in 21. The largest millage increases between 1995 and 2000 were recorded in Scranton City (16.12 mills on land and 5.86 mills on improvements), Dunmore Borough (6.50 mills), and Spring Brook Township (7.80 mills)—which recorded the largest proportionate increase (125.8 percent). The decreases occurred in the boroughs of Clarks Summit (3.50 mills or 20.6 percent), Dalton (4.00 mills or 16.7 percent), and Throop (4.00 mills or 50.0 percent) and in the townships of Elmhurst (1.30 mills or 12.0 percent), Fell (4.55 mills or 44.4 percent), La Plume (0.05 mill or 1.1 percent), Newton (2.50 mills or 17.2 percent), and South Abington (0.50 mill or 6.3 percent).

Lackawanna County's real estate tax millage rose by 5.0 mills or 24.1 percent since 1995. Scranton City's land and improvements millages for the five-year period rose by 16.12 and 5.86 mills, respectively; Carbondale's real estate tax rate remained unchanged during the five-year period.

Real estate millage rates in Lackawanna County's boroughs now range from 4.00 in Throop to 28.25 in Dunmore; millages in the townships range from 2.05 in Clifton to 14.00 in Carbondale and Spring Brook. For purposes of comparison, Scranton City's year 2000 real estate tax rates of 82.122 mills on land and 17.861 mills on improvements convert to a single millage equivalent of 34.3719. Carbondale City's current millage is 24.97. (Blakely and Taylor boroughs did not levy real estate taxes in 2000.)

In addition to the general purpose and municipal-wide special purpose real estate taxes mentioned above, some municipalities levy special purpose real estate taxes only in selected areas of the jurisdiction for such services as street lighting and fire hydrants. These are not included in this study, nor are service fees which may be charged for garbage collection, sewage collection and treatment, and so forth. For example, eight Lackawanna County municipalities report garbage collection fees in the year 2000 of \$2.00 on a per bag basis and between \$100 and \$178 per household on a flat annual basis. Also, various nonproperty taxes, particularly those levied under Act 511, are widely used by Lackawanna County's municipalities (and school districts, as well). Included are earned income, per capita, occupational privilege, real estate transfer, amusement, mercantile, and business privilege taxes. **During the period under review, some jurisdictions may have imposed for the first time or may have changed nonproperty tax rates, service fees, or special purpose real estate taxes.**

The certified assessed valuation of taxable property in Lackawanna County for the year 2000 totals \$1,303,048,278, an increase of \$7,811,977 or 0.6 percent over 1999. Assessed valuations rose in 27 of the county's 40 municipalities since last year ranging from \$5,200 in Clarks Green Borough to \$1,850,542 in Dickson City Borough. Other large increases during this period were recorded in Archbald Borough (\$1,536,994) and South Abington Township (\$1,637,979). The largest proportionate increases occurred in the townships of Greenfield and West Abington—both 4.2 percent. Thirteen decreases in assessed valuation were recorded since last year ranging from \$9,014 or 0.1 percent in Dalton Borough to \$1,429,292 or 5.6 percent in Throop Borough. (See Exhibit II.)

For the five-year period beginning in 1995, Lackawanna County's assessed valuation rose by \$45,740,855 or 3.6 percent. Assessed valuations increased in 34 of the county's municipalities during this period. The largest increases occurred in the boroughs of Dickson City (\$12,878,779 or 29.0 percent) and Moosic (\$10,020,288 or 24.9 percent). Assessed valuations decreased in the cities of Carbondale (\$219,930 or 0.5 percent) and Scranton (\$6,272,219 or 1.6 percent), in the boroughs of Clarks Green (\$63,510 or 0.4 percent) and Throop (\$1,760,471 or 6.8 percent), and in the townships of Benton (\$16,402 or 0.1 percent) and Clifton (\$3,108,858 or 9.8 percent).

Year 2000 assessed valuations in Lackawanna County's 17 boroughs range from \$4,548,367 in Vandling to \$81,310,554 in Dunmore, while the range in the 21 townships is from \$1,748,494 in West Abington to \$74,185,770 in South Abington. Carbondale City's year 2000 assessed valuation is \$40,943,109; Scranton City's is \$375,820,646.

The county's predetermined assessment ratio for 1995, 1999, and 2000 is 100 percent of market value. The Common Level Ratio of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 22.4 percent in 1995 and 21.2 percent in 1998 (the most recent figure available). The county most recently reassessed in 1972; the predetermined assessment ratio was raised to 100 percent in 1986.

The foregoing narrative and exhibits which follow are designed primarily to identify changes since last year and during the most recent five-year period in the real estate tax levies, tax rates, and assessed valuations of the county government and each municipality in the county. No valid comparison of tax burden among the municipalities can be made without a detailed analysis of the quantity and quality of services provided and the role of nonproperty taxes, special fees, and charges, and any municipal-operated utilities; such as, sewer and water.

The Pennsylvania Economy League is a 64-year old nonprofit, nonpartisan organization which serves as an active agent of change for the increased effectiveness of state government, and also for the adoption of state policies and programs which will improve the state's economy and encourage economic development in order to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Pennsylvania. At the local level PEL works to improve government by bringing about the sound financing and the most cost-effective delivery of necessary public services. To these ends, PEL encourages and assists officials of Pennsylvania's state and local governments in formulating and implementing sound policies and practices through its program of professional and unbiased research in government finance and management. PEL's efforts are made possible by the voluntary tax deductible memberships of more than 1,000 individuals, businesses, institutions, and associations in Lackawanna County and throughout Pennsylvania.

EXHIBIT I

Lackawanna County
County and Municipal Real Estate Tax Rates and Levies ^{1/}
 2000

	2000		Change 1999 to 2000				Change 1995 to 2000			
	Tax	Gross Tax ^{2/}	Tax Rate		Gross Tax Levy		Tax Rate		Gross Tax Levy	
	Millage	Levy	Mills	%	\$	%	Mills	%	\$	%
COUNTY:										
Lackawanna ^{HR/}	25.7293	\$33,526,520	—	—	200,997	0.6	5.00	24.1	7,463,417	28.6
CITIES:										
Carbondale ^{HR/}	24.9700	1,022,349	—	—	-7,203	-0.7	—	—	-5,492	-0.5
Scranton—Total ^{HR/ 3/}	34.3719	12,917,681	5.44	18.8	2,045,187	18.8	8.46	32.7	2,963,167	29.8
Land	82.1220	7,929,836	13.12	19.0	1,240,250	18.5	16.12	24.4	1,367,236	20.8
Improvements	17.8610	4,987,845	2.86	19.1	804,937	19.2	5.86	48.8	1,595,931	47.1
BOROUGHES:										
Archbald	16.2000	661,118	—	—	24,900	3.9	—	—	40,196	6.5
Blakely	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Clarks Green	9.0000	128,302	—	—	47	—	—	—	-572	-0.4
Clarks Summit	13.5000	570,910	—	—	9,374	1.7	-3.50	-20.6	-127,012	-18.2
Dalton	20.0000	167,785	—	—	-180	-0.1	-4.00	-16.7	-26,743	-13.7
Dickson City	12.8000	734,079	—	—	23,687	3.3	—	—	164,848	29.0
Dunmore	28.2500	2,297,023	3.50	14.1	282,650	14.0	6.50	29.9	547,652	31.3
Jermyn	20.0000	167,595	—	—	2,066	1.2	—	—	2,868	1.7
Jessup	15.7000	328,170	—	—	5,266	1.6	—	—	17,401	5.6
Mayfield	20.5000	183,713	—	—	3,102	1.7	—	—	5,512	3.1
Moosic	14.2995	717,647	—	—	13,012	1.8	4.00	38.8	303,951	73.5
Moscow	15.0000	170,439	—	—	2,234	1.3	—	—	20,748	13.9
Old Forge	12.0000	556,939	—	—	5,949	1.1	—	—	12,414	2.3
Olyphant	10.6000	328,506	—	—	7,206	2.2	—	—	21,894	7.1
Taylor	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Throop	4.0000	96,580	—	—	-5,717	-5.6	-4.00	-50.0	-110,664	-53.4
Vandling	9.0000	40,935	—	—	-108	-0.3	—	—	1,789	4.6
TOWNSHIPS:										
Abington	11.2500	238,881	0.50	4.7	12,710	5.6	2.00	21.6	52,500	28.2
Benton	4.3000	54,618	—	—	-1,664	-3.0	—	—	-70	-0.1
Carbondale	14.0000	96,330	—	—	1,128	1.2	—	—	3,186	3.4
Clifton	2.0500	58,666	—	—	-2,453	-4.0	1.00	95.2	25,353	76.1
Covington	10.2500	325,940	1.00	10.8	31,347	10.6	0.75	7.9	34,598	11.9
Elmhurst	9.5000	40,478	—	—	480	1.2	-1.30	-12.0	206	0.5
Fell	5.7000	76,747	—	—	2,683	3.6	-4.55	-44.4	-54,268	-41.4
Glenburn	3.0000	34,352	—	—	479	1.4	—	—	2,742	8.7
Greenfield	11.0000	154,937	—	—	6,178	4.2	2.23	25.4	47,174	43.8
Jefferson	6.8500	147,556	—	—	207	0.1	—	—	2,464	1.7
La Plume	4.4500	11,998	—	—	158	1.3	-0.05	-1.1	512	4.5
Madison	6.0000	79,978	—	—	1,751	2.2	1.00	20.0	21,065	35.8
Newton	12.0000	214,928	—	—	-1,128	-0.5	-2.50	-17.2	-19,958	-8.5
North Abington	7.0000	52,995	—	—	-123	-0.2	—	—	3,747	7.6
Ransom	7.0000	66,729	—	—	-390	-0.6	—	—	1,727	2.7
Roaring Brook	9.5000	129,712	2.00	26.7	27,693	27.1	2.00	26.7	28,156	27.7
Scott	11.0000	392,390	—	—	-2,445	-0.6	2.00	22.2	89,499	29.5
South Abington	7.5000	556,393	0.50	7.1	48,558	9.6	-0.50	-6.3	2,594	0.5
Spring Brook	14.0000	211,766	—	—	4,872	2.4	7.80	125.8	127,989	152.8
Thornhurst	2.3000	25,614	—	—	-198	-0.8	—	—	729	2.9
West Abington	2.4500	4,284	—	—	172	4.2	—	—	502	13.3

^{HR/} Home Rule Charter municipality.

^{1/} Tax rates and levies for 1995, 1999, and 2000 are based on certified municipal assessments at a predetermined 100 percent assessment ratio. The Common Level Ratio of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 22.4 percent in 1995 and 21.2 percent in 1998 (the most recent figure available).

^{2/} The gross real estate tax levy is the potential tax yield based on the millage and the certified taxable valuation; it is not necessarily the amount of real estate tax revenue budgeted by a jurisdiction or the amount which it expects to receive.

^{3/} Figures represent the single millage equivalent of the city's split tax rate on land and improvements and the resulting combined tax levy.

EXHIBIT II

Lackawanna County
Assessed Valuations^{1/}
2000

	Assessed Valuation	Change 1999 to 2000		Change 1995 to 2000	
		\$	%	\$	%
COUNTY:					
Lackawanna ^{HR/}	\$1,303,048,278	7,811,977	0.6	45,740,855	3.6
CITIES:					
Carbondale ^{HR/}	40,943,109	-288,440	-0.7	-219,930	-0.5
Scranton—Total ^{HR/}	375,820,646	9,613	<0.1	-6,272,219	-1.6
Land	96,561,651	-388,868	-0.4	-2,871,679	-2.9
Improvements	279,258,995	398,481	0.1	-3,400,540	-1.2
BOROUGHES:					
Archbald	40,809,728	1,536,994	3.9	2,481,181	6.5
Blakely	34,063,600	142,807	0.4	478,506	1.4
Clarks Green	14,255,807	5,200	<0.1	-63,510	-0.4
Clarks Summit	42,289,638	694,343	1.7	1,235,426	3.0
Dalton	8,389,259	-9,014	-0.1	283,909	3.5
Dickson City	57,349,914	1,850,542	3.3	12,878,779	29.0
Dunmore	81,310,554	-78,270	-0.1	879,687	1.1
Jermyn	8,379,766	103,299	1.2	143,427	1.7
Jessup	20,902,527	335,382	1.6	1,108,339	5.6
Mayfield	8,961,607	151,293	1.7	268,867	3.1
Moosic	50,186,874	909,950	1.8	10,020,288	24.9
Moscow	11,362,604	148,920	1.3	1,383,207	13.9
Old Forge	46,411,563	495,747	1.1	1,034,446	2.3
Olyphant	30,991,161	679,795	2.2	2,065,459	7.1
Taylor	33,329,030	690,565	2.1	2,581,753	8.4
Throop	24,145,036	-1,429,292	-5.6	-1,760,471	-6.8
Vandling	4,548,367	-12,000	-0.3	198,807	4.6
TOWNSHIPS:					
Abington	21,233,894	194,700	0.9	1,084,641	5.4
Benton	12,701,847	-387,000	-3.0	-16,402	-0.1
Carbondale	6,880,709	80,550	1.2	227,569	3.4
Clifton	28,617,483	-1,196,562	-4.0	-3,108,858	-9.8
Covington	31,799,051	-48,867	-0.2	1,131,509	3.7
Elmhurst	4,260,824	50,480	1.2	531,980	14.3
Fell	13,464,418	470,788	3.6	682,453	5.3
Glenburn	11,450,533	159,402	1.4	913,901	8.7
Greenfield	14,085,158	561,615	4.2	1,797,443	14.6
Jefferson	21,540,993	30,238	0.1	359,677	1.7
La Plume	2,696,145	35,500	1.3	143,604	5.6
Madison	13,329,680	291,892	2.2	1,547,177	13.1
Newton	17,910,676	-93,983	-0.5	1,711,649	10.6
North Abington	7,570,763	-17,564	-0.2	535,269	7.6
Ransom	9,532,764	-55,672	-0.6	246,709	2.7
Roaring Brook	13,653,931	51,410	0.4	113,096	0.8
Scott	35,671,792	-222,267	-0.6	2,017,199	6.0
South Abington	74,185,770	1,637,979	2.3	4,960,922	7.2
Spring Brook	15,126,159	347,996	2.4	1,613,686	11.9
Thornhurst	11,136,394	-86,402	-0.8	316,921	2.9
West Abington	1,748,494	70,300	4.2	204,749	13.3

^{HR/} Home Rule Charter municipality.

^{1/} Valuations for 1995, 1999, and 2000 are based on certified municipal assessments at a predetermined 100 percent assessment ratio. The Common Level Ratios of assessed values to selling prices as determined by the State Tax Equalization Board (STEB) was 22.4 percent in 1995 and 21.2 percent in 1998 (the most recent figure available).

SOURCE: Lackawanna County Board of Assessment and Revision of Taxes.

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