



A.593 (CAHILL)

Summary

The proposed legislation would add Ulster County to those counties already included in the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act. Passed in 2007, the Hudson Valley Community Preservation Act gives Westchester and Putnam County municipalities the power to choose for themselves whether or not to raise local revenue through a real estate transfer tax (that must be approved by local referendum) for the purpose of preserving natural and historic resources.

Explanation

This measure would give the residents of towns within Ulster County, if they choose to do so, the same options for preserving their communities as enjoyed by six East End towns in Long Island's Suffolk County, the Town of Warwick in Orange County, and the Town of Red Hook in Dutchess County. Community preservation efforts have been successful on Long Island in particular. The East End towns have set aside more than \$400 million for conservation efforts since 1998, and have preserved over 7,500 acres of open space.

Once enacted, this legislation will allow towns and villages within Ulster County to create a Community Preservation Plan which identifies properties that are important for preserving farmland, as well as the community's natural and historic heritage. Through a public referendum, residents of towns and villages within Ulster County decide for themselves whether to create a real estate transfer tax of up to two percent to fund the preservation of these properties. The tax only applies to the amount over the median real estate price in Ulster County, which as of 2007 is \$246,000. For example, in the case of a home purchased for \$296,000, if the tax were set at the full two percent over the median real estate price, the transfer tax would amount to \$1,000.

Towns that seek the authority to protect community character through local funding and local control should be granted such power. Passage of this bill would benefit Ulster County's residents, towns and villages by giving them the choice to decide how and when to preserve their community's heritage, while also more effectively guiding the town's development.

This bill was introduced at the request of the Ulster County Legislature.

Environmental Advocates of New York supports this bill.

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