

Good morning. My name is Tom Kosinski. I am the current president of GRO, the Greater Rockwell Organization. This year we are celebrating our 30th anniversary. We are a neighborhood organization made up of approximately one hundred and twenty individuals, and families in the vicinity of the Rockwell el stop on the CTA's Brown line. We engage in activities that promote civic pride and community welfare in our neighborhood. We, and people like us are the backbone of the property tax base in the city.

I am here on behalf of the GRO membership to add our voices in endorsing Alderman Gene Schulner's resolution to extend the 7% property tax cap. We consider the extension of the tax cap as necessary to the health of our community. At the same time we recognize the palliative nature of the extension of the tax cap. While it addresses the immediate needs of our community, it does not address the underlying issue of the basic inequity of the property tax system in the state of Illinois.

We, like all neighborhoods in our city, are wrestling with the unemployment crisis. Unemployment may be 10 percent in the state of Illinois, but by my informal calculation real unemployment among our membership is much higher than that. This unemployment crisis only exacerbates the dire situation many of our members are facing with the removal of the cap. People who have lived, worked, and voted in our community are under threat of being taxed out of their homes. Just as their income dries up, the caps are removed; the resulting tax increase puts an unsustainable burden upon them. It is apparent, now more than ever, that the current property tax system rigidly imposes a punitive tax on the people whose sweat and tenacity have built the city's neighborhoods. Our friends and neighbors are threatened. They don't deserve this treatment. Remember this and support Mr. Schulner's resolution.