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Golisano: Property taxes too high

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New York has lost 40 companies in the Fortune 500 during the past 40 years and will lose more if the state doesn't reform its tax code and government, Paychex Inc. founder Thomas Golisano said Tuesday.

Golisano has been running a paid-media campaign against high property taxes and what he says are state government inefficiencies.

Founder of the Responsible New York political action committee, Golisano has been behind his committee's newspaper ads in the Rochester area, which began in January. More ads are on the way in other upstate markets, said Jack O'Donnell, executive director of Responsible New York.

Discussing his views with the editorial board of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, Golisano said it's essential that New York consolidate local government units, starting perhaps with villages.

He said Monroe County alone has 624 taxing and regulatory units, including 162 lighting districts and 102 drainage districts. "So much of this is just duplication," he said.

Residents of Monroe and surrounding counties pay some of the highest property taxes in the nation as a percentage of their homes' value, a recent study showed.

Golisano, who ran unsuccessfully for governor three times, acknowledged limited success in the 2008 elections, when his group endorsed candidates in both parties for state offices.

He said that to stem the loss of manufacturers to other countries, American business leaders should make sure they invest in and take ownership of such companies.

And U.S. educators should offer more business and entrepreneurial classes in elementary and secondary schools, he said.

Golisano has put together an energy company, Empire State Wind Energy LLC, which has 15 projects worth a potential \$800 million in western New York.

The company will focus on selling wind turbines and working with local governments to widely spread the benefits of the power savings.

Such savings could cut property taxes in the towns, he said.

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