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Christie orders special session on property taxes

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New Jersey lawmakers traditionally start their summer vacation after the state budget is enacted, but that's not the case this year.

Gov. Chris Christie is calling a special session Thursday for lawmakers to consider his tax reform agenda.

The governor wants legislators to act on his proposal for a constitutional amendment to limit property tax increases to 2.5 percent.

Lawmakers have approved their own plan to cap tax hikes at 2.9 percent with several exclusions.

While analysts consider it unlikely Democrats who control the Legislature will act anytime soon on Christie's plan, John Weingart at the Eagleton Institute says the special session may have an impact.

"If they do consider it with all the attention it will be getting this week and don't take action, by next year it will be clear that this is an issue that has been on the table for some time that has received a lot of consideration," Weingart said.

"The session this week might make it easier to get some major change to happen next year," he said.

In addition to the constitutional amendment, the governor wants lawmakers to consider his 33-bill package to help local municipalities control costs.

Rider University political science professor Ben Dworkin says he expects Democrats will consider some of the bills in what Christie calls his "tool kit."

"A few of them will probably already be supported. Everyone will just be on board with it and will pass that," he said. "Other than that I think they'll probably just sit around a lot and not do anything."

Dworkin also wonders how much attention the public will be paying. While residents frequently complain about the state's highest-in-the-nation property taxes, Dworkin says many people will be more concerned with getting away for the holiday weekend.

"Even though both sides are playing to the public in terms of trying to seek public support for their view of how these issues should be handled the public is going probably to be out of touch and simply not focused on this at all," he said.

"A few of them will probably already be supported. Everyone will just be on board with it and will pass that. Other than that I think they'll probably just sit around a lot and not do anything."

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