

of Your Voice." The student-produced videos will take the form of a television commercial of 30-60 seconds in length that can be staged as a public service announcement, news broadcast, talk show, music video, animation, documentary or short play, etc.

Winners will receive prizes for themselves and their schools. The contest ends on **Oct. 31**. For more information, visit www.pennncord.org.

Opportunity to reduce real estate tax-collection costs

During the next few months, counties, municipalities and school districts in Pennsylvania have a once-in-four-years opportunity to bring about savings in their real estate tax-collection costs.

Prior to Feb. 15, 2009, local governing bodies can change the methods and rates of compensation for elected tax collectors, and these methods and rates will become effective for those tax collectors elected to four-year terms of office beginning in January 2010. It is time for local officials and taxpayers to begin to do their homework so that they can make the best use of this rare cost-saving opportunity.

Prior analyses by the PA Economy League of real estate tax collection costs in more than 500 jurisdictions identified millions of dollars in potential annual savings. Jurisdictions were advised to shift from the traditional commission form of compensation to the more appropriate salary or "per-bill" payments and/or to lower their rates of compensation.

Act 169 of 1998 should prove helpful to officials reviewing their municipal tax collector compensation. It requires that tax collectors regularly file reports with the taxing jurisdictions they serve, detailing the taxes collected using standard forms provided by the state, and that the tax collectors' accounts be audited annually by the duly authorized auditors of the taxing district – the elected auditors, the controller or an independent appointed auditor.

The full series of the PEL Tax Collection Compensation Reports can be viewed at [www.pelcentral.org/Tax Collection](http://www.pelcentral.org/Tax%20Collection).