SB3217

LRB104 19256 HLH 32702 b

104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

SB3217

Introduced 2/2/2026, by Sen. Sue Rezin

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

35 ILCS 200/15-172

Amends the Property Tax Code. Provides that, beginning in taxable year 2026, the maximum income limitation for the low-income senior citizens assessment freeze homestead exemption shall be increased each year by the percentage increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index. Effective immediately.

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A BILL FOR

AN ACT concerning revenue.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois, represented in the General Assembly:

Section 5. The Property Tax Code is amended by changing Section 15-172 as follows:

(35 ILCS 200/15-172)

Sec. 15-172. Low-Income Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption.

(a) This Section may be cited as the Low-Income Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption.

(b) As used in this Section:

"Applicant" means an individual who has filed an application under this Section.

"Base amount" means the base year equalized assessed value of the residence plus the first year's equalized assessed value of any added improvements which increased the assessed value of the residence after the base year.

"Base year" means the taxable year prior to the taxable year for which the applicant first qualifies and applies for the exemption provided that in the prior taxable year the property was improved with a permanent structure that was occupied as a residence by the applicant who was liable for paying real property taxes on the property and who was either

(i) an owner of record of the property or had legal or equitable interest in the property as evidenced by a written instrument or (ii) had a legal or equitable interest as a lessee in the parcel of property that was a single-family ~~single family~~ residence. If in any subsequent taxable year for which the applicant applies and qualifies for the exemption the equalized assessed value of the residence is less than the equalized assessed value in the existing base year (provided that such equalized assessed value is not based on an assessed value that results from a temporary irregularity in the property that reduces the assessed value for one or more taxable years), then that subsequent taxable year shall become the base year until a new base year is established under the terms of this paragraph. For taxable year 1999 only, the Chief County Assessment Officer shall review (i) all taxable years for which the applicant applied and qualified for the exemption and (ii) the existing base year. The assessment officer shall select as the new base year the year with the lowest equalized assessed value. An equalized assessed value that is based on an assessed value that results from a temporary irregularity in the property that reduces the assessed value for one or more taxable years shall not be considered the lowest equalized assessed value. The selected year shall be the base year for taxable year 1999 and thereafter until a new base year is established under the terms of this paragraph.

"Chief County Assessment Officer" means the County Assessor or Supervisor of Assessments of the county in which the property is located.

"Consumer Price Index-u" means the index published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor that measures the average change in prices of goods and services purchased by all urban consumers, United States city average, all items, 1982-84=100.

"Equalized assessed value" means the assessed value as equalized by the Illinois Department of Revenue.

"Household" means the applicant, the spouse of the applicant, and all persons using the residence of the applicant as their principal place of residence.

"Household income" means the combined income of the members of a household for the calendar year preceding the taxable year.

"Income" has the same meaning as provided in Section 3.07 of the Senior Citizens and Persons with Disabilities Property Tax Relief Act, except that, beginning in assessment year 2001, "income" does not include veteran's benefits.

"Internal Revenue Code of 1986" means the United States Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or any successor law or laws relating to federal income taxes in effect for the year preceding the taxable year.

"Life care facility that qualifies as a cooperative" means a facility as defined in Section 2 of the Life Care Facilities

Act.

"Maximum income limitation" means:

(1) $35,000 prior to taxable year 1999;

(2) $40,000 in taxable years 1999 through 2003;

(3) $45,000 in taxable years 2004 through 2005;

(4) $50,000 in taxable years 2006 and 2007;

(5) $55,000 in taxable years 2008 through 2016;

(6) for taxable year 2017, (i) $65,000 for qualified property located in a county with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants and (ii) $55,000 for qualified property located in a county with fewer than 3,000,000 inhabitants;

(7) for taxable years 2018 through 2025, $65,000 for all qualified property; <u>and</u>

<u>(8) for taxable years 2026 and thereafter, the maximum income limitation for the immediately preceding taxable year, multiplied by one plus the percentage increase, if any, in the Consumer Price Index-u for the 12-month period ending in September of the calendar year immediately preceding the taxable year for which the limitation is calculated.</u>

~~(8) for taxable year 2026, $75,000 for all qualified property;~~

~~(9) for taxable year 2027, $77,000 for all qualified property; and~~

~~(10) for taxable years 2028 and thereafter, $79,000 for all qualified property.~~

As an alternative income valuation, a homeowner who is enrolled in any of the following programs may be presumed to have household income that does not exceed the maximum income limitation for that tax year as required by this Section: Aid to the Aged, Blind or Disabled (AABD) Program or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), both of which are administered by the Department of Human Services; the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which is administered by the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity; The Benefit Access program, which is administered by the Department on Aging; and the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program.

A chief county assessment officer may indicate that he or she has verified an applicant's income eligibility for this exemption but may not report which program or programs, if any, enroll the applicant. Release of personal information submitted pursuant to this Section shall be deemed an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy under the Freedom of Information Act.

"Residence" means the principal dwelling place and appurtenant structures used for residential purposes in this State occupied on January 1 of the taxable year by a household and so much of the surrounding land, constituting the parcel upon which the dwelling place is situated, as is used for residential purposes. If the Chief County Assessment Officer has established a specific legal description for a portion of property constituting the residence, then that portion of property shall be deemed the residence for the purposes of this Section.

"Taxable year" means the calendar year during which ad valorem property taxes payable in the next succeeding year are levied.

(c) Beginning in taxable year 1994, a low-income senior citizens assessment freeze homestead exemption is granted for real property that is improved with a permanent structure that is occupied as a residence by an applicant who (i) is 65 years of age or older during the taxable year, (ii) has a household income that does not exceed the maximum income limitation, (iii) is liable for paying real property taxes on the property, and (iv) is an owner of record of the property or has a legal or equitable interest in the property as evidenced by a written instrument. This homestead exemption shall also apply to a leasehold interest in a parcel of property improved with a permanent structure that is a single-family ~~single family~~ residence that is occupied as a residence by a person who (i) is 65 years of age or older during the taxable year, (ii) has a household income that does not exceed the maximum income limitation, (iii) has a legal or equitable ownership interest in the property as lessee, and (iv) is liable for the payment of real property taxes on that property.

In counties of 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, the amount of the exemption for all taxable years is the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount. In all other counties, the amount of the exemption is as follows: (i) through taxable year 2005 and for taxable year 2007 and thereafter, the amount of this exemption shall be the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount; and (ii) for taxable year 2006, the amount of the exemption is as follows:

(1) For an applicant who has a household income of $45,000 or less, the amount of the exemption is the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount.

(2) For an applicant who has a household income exceeding $45,000 but not exceeding $46,250, the amount of the exemption is (i) the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount (ii) multiplied by 0.8.

(3) For an applicant who has a household income exceeding $46,250 but not exceeding $47,500, the amount of the exemption is (i) the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount (ii) multiplied by 0.6.

(4) For an applicant who has a household income exceeding $47,500 but not exceeding $48,750, the amount of the exemption is (i) the equalized assessed value of the

residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount (ii) multiplied by 0.4.

(5) For an applicant who has a household income exceeding $48,750 but not exceeding $50,000, the amount of the exemption is (i) the equalized assessed value of the residence in the taxable year for which application is made minus the base amount (ii) multiplied by 0.2.

When the applicant is a surviving spouse of an applicant for a prior year for the same residence for which an exemption under this Section has been granted, the base year and base amount for that residence are the same as for the applicant for the prior year.

Each year at the time the assessment books are certified to the County Clerk, the Board of Review or Board of Appeals shall give to the County Clerk a list of the assessed values of improvements on each parcel qualifying for this exemption that were added after the base year for this parcel and that increased the assessed value of the property.

In the case of land improved with an apartment building owned and operated as a cooperative or a building that is a life care facility that qualifies as a cooperative, the maximum reduction from the equalized assessed value of the property is limited to the sum of the reductions calculated for each unit occupied as a residence by a person or persons (i) 65 years of age or older, (ii) with a household income that does not exceed the maximum income limitation, (iii) who is liable, by contract with the owner or owners of record, for paying real property taxes on the property, and (iv) who is an owner of record of a legal or equitable interest in the cooperative apartment building, other than a leasehold interest. In the instance of a cooperative where a homestead exemption has been granted under this Section, the cooperative association or its management firm shall credit the savings resulting from that exemption only to the apportioned tax liability of the owner who qualified for the exemption. Any person who willfully refuses to credit that savings to an owner who qualifies for the exemption is guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

When a homestead exemption has been granted under this Section and an applicant then becomes a resident of a facility licensed under the Assisted Living and Shared Housing Act, the Nursing Home Care Act, the Specialized Mental Health Rehabilitation Act of 2013, the ID/DD Community Care Act, or the MC/DD Act, the exemption shall be granted in subsequent years so long as the residence (i) continues to be occupied by the qualified applicant's spouse or (ii) if remaining unoccupied, is still owned by the qualified applicant for the homestead exemption.

Beginning January 1, 1997, when an individual dies who would have qualified for an exemption under this Section, and the surviving spouse does not independently qualify for this exemption because of age, the exemption under this Section shall be granted to the surviving spouse for the taxable year preceding and the taxable year of the death, provided that, except for age, the surviving spouse meets all other qualifications for the granting of this exemption for those years.

When married persons maintain separate residences, the exemption provided for in this Section may be claimed by only one of such persons and for only one residence.

For taxable year 1994 only, in counties having less than 3,000,000 inhabitants, to receive the exemption, a person shall submit an application by February 15, 1995 to the Chief County Assessment Officer of the county in which the property is located. In counties having 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, for taxable year 1994 and all subsequent taxable years, to receive the exemption, a person may submit an application to the Chief County Assessment Officer of the county in which the property is located during such period as may be specified by the Chief County Assessment Officer. The Chief County Assessment Officer in counties of 3,000,000 or more inhabitants shall annually give notice of the application period by mail or by publication. In counties having less than 3,000,000 inhabitants, beginning with taxable year 1995 and thereafter, to receive the exemption, a person shall submit an application by July 1 of each taxable year to the Chief County Assessment Officer of the county in which the property is located. A county may, by ordinance, establish a date for submission of applications that is different than July 1. The applicant shall submit with the application an affidavit of the applicant's total household income, age, marital status (and if married the name and address of the applicant's spouse, if known), and principal dwelling place of members of the household on January 1 of the taxable year. The Department shall establish, by rule, a method for verifying the accuracy of affidavits filed by applicants under this Section, and the Chief County Assessment Officer may conduct audits of any taxpayer claiming an exemption under this Section to verify that the taxpayer is eligible to receive the exemption. Each application shall contain or be verified by a written declaration that it is made under the penalties of perjury. A taxpayer's signing a fraudulent application under this Act is perjury, as defined in Section 32-2 of the Criminal Code of 2012. The applications shall be clearly marked as applications for the Low-Income Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption and must contain a notice that any taxpayer who receives the exemption is subject to an audit by the Chief County Assessment Officer.

Notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, in counties having fewer than 3,000,000 inhabitants, if an applicant fails to file the application required by this Section in a timely manner and this failure to file is due to a mental or physical condition sufficiently severe so as to render the applicant incapable of filing the application in a timely manner, the Chief County Assessment Officer may extend the filing deadline for a period of 30 days after the applicant regains the capability to file the application, but in no case may the filing deadline be extended beyond 3 months of the original filing deadline. In order to receive the extension provided in this paragraph, the applicant shall provide the Chief County Assessment Officer with a signed statement from the applicant's physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician assistant stating the nature and extent of the condition, that, in the physician's, advanced practice registered nurse's, or physician assistant's opinion, the condition was so severe that it rendered the applicant incapable of filing the application in a timely manner, and the date on which the applicant regained the capability to file the application.

Beginning January 1, 1998, notwithstanding any other provision to the contrary, in counties having fewer than 3,000,000 inhabitants, if an applicant fails to file the application required by this Section in a timely manner and this failure to file is due to a mental or physical condition sufficiently severe so as to render the applicant incapable of filing the application in a timely manner, the Chief County Assessment Officer may extend the filing deadline for a period of 3 months. In order to receive the extension provided in this paragraph, the applicant shall provide the Chief County Assessment Officer with a signed statement from the applicant's physician, advanced practice registered nurse, or physician assistant stating the nature and extent of the condition, and that, in the physician's, advanced practice registered nurse's, or physician assistant's opinion, the condition was so severe that it rendered the applicant incapable of filing the application in a timely manner.

In counties having less than 3,000,000 inhabitants, if an applicant was denied an exemption in taxable year 1994 and the denial occurred due to an error on the part of an assessment official, or his or her agent or employee, then beginning in taxable year 1997 the applicant's base year, for purposes of determining the amount of the exemption, shall be 1993 rather than 1994. In addition, in taxable year 1997, the applicant's exemption shall also include an amount equal to (i) the amount of any exemption denied to the applicant in taxable year 1995 as a result of using 1994, rather than 1993, as the base year, (ii) the amount of any exemption denied to the applicant in taxable year 1996 as a result of using 1994, rather than 1993, as the base year, and (iii) the amount of the exemption erroneously denied for taxable year 1994.

For purposes of this Section, a person who will be 65 years of age during the current taxable year shall be eligible to apply for the homestead exemption during that taxable year. Application shall be made during the application period in effect for the county of his or her residence.

The Chief County Assessment Officer may determine the eligibility of a life care facility that qualifies as a cooperative to receive the benefits provided by this Section by use of an affidavit, application, visual inspection, questionnaire, or other reasonable method in order to ensure ~~insure~~ that the tax savings resulting from the exemption are credited by the management firm to the apportioned tax liability of each qualifying resident. The Chief County Assessment Officer may request reasonable proof that the management firm has so credited that exemption.

Except as provided in this Section, all information received by the chief county assessment officer or the Department from applications filed under this Section, or from any investigation conducted under the provisions of this Section, shall be confidential, except for official purposes or pursuant to official procedures for collection of any State or local tax or enforcement of any civil or criminal penalty or sanction imposed by this Act or by any statute or ordinance imposing a State or local tax. Any person who divulges any such information in any manner, except in accordance with a proper judicial order, is guilty of a Class A misdemeanor.

Nothing contained in this Section shall prevent the Director or chief county assessment officer from publishing or making available reasonable statistics concerning the operation of the exemption contained in this Section in which the contents of claims are grouped into aggregates in such a way that information contained in any individual claim shall not be disclosed.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, for taxable year 2017 and thereafter, in counties of 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, the amount of the exemption shall be the greater of (i) the amount of the exemption otherwise calculated under this Section or (ii) $2,000.

(c-5) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each chief county assessment officer may approve this exemption for the 2020 taxable year, without application, for any property that was approved for this exemption for the 2019 taxable year, provided that:

(1) the county board has declared a local disaster as provided in the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act related to the COVID-19 public health emergency;

(2) the owner of record of the property as of January 1, 2020 is the same as the owner of record of the property as of January 1, 2019;

(3) the exemption for the 2019 taxable year has not been determined to be an erroneous exemption as defined by this Code; and

(4) the applicant for the 2019 taxable year has not asked for the exemption to be removed for the 2019 or 2020 taxable years.

Nothing in this subsection shall preclude or impair the authority of a chief county assessment officer to conduct audits of any taxpayer claiming an exemption under this

Section to verify that the taxpayer is eligible to receive the exemption as provided elsewhere in this Section.

(c-10) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, each chief county assessment officer may approve this exemption for the 2021 taxable year, without application, for any property that was approved for this exemption for the 2020 taxable year, if:

(1) the county board has declared a local disaster as provided in the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act related to the COVID-19 public health emergency;

(2) the owner of record of the property as of January 1, 2021 is the same as the owner of record of the property as of January 1, 2020;

(3) the exemption for the 2020 taxable year has not been determined to be an erroneous exemption as defined by this Code; and

(4) the taxpayer for the 2020 taxable year has not asked for the exemption to be removed for the 2020 or 2021 taxable years.

Nothing in this subsection shall preclude or impair the authority of a chief county assessment officer to conduct audits of any taxpayer claiming an exemption under this Section to verify that the taxpayer is eligible to receive the exemption as provided elsewhere in this Section.

(d) Each Chief County Assessment Officer shall annually publish a notice of availability of the exemption provided under this Section. The notice shall be published at least 60 days but no more than 75 days prior to the date on which the application must be submitted to the Chief County Assessment Officer of the county in which the property is located. The notice shall appear in a newspaper of general circulation in the county.

Notwithstanding Sections 6 and 8 of the State Mandates Act, no reimbursement by the State is required for the implementation of any mandate created by this Section.

(Source: P.A. 104-452, eff. 12-12-25; revised 1-8-26.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.