AN ACT in relation to taxes.

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 Sections 15-170, 15-172, 15-175, and 15-180 as follows:

(35 ILCS 200/15-170)

Sec. 15-170. Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption. An annual homestead exemption limited, except as described here with relation to cooperatives or life care facilities, to a maximum reduction set forth below from the property's value, as equalized or assessed by the Department, is granted for property that is occupied as a residence by a person 65 years of age or older who is liable for paying real estate taxes on the property and is an owner of record of the property or has a legal or equitable interest therein as evidenced by a written instrument, except for a leasehold interest, other than a leasehold interest of land on which a single family residence is located, which is occupied as a residence by a person 65 years or older who has an ownership interest therein, legal, equitable or as a lessee, and on which he or she is liable for the payment of property taxes. The maximum reduction shall be $2,500 in counties with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants and $2,000 in all other counties. For land improved with an apartment building owned and operated as a cooperative, the maximum reduction from the value of the property, as equalized by the Department, shall be multiplied by the number of apartments or units occupied by a person 65 years of age or older who is liable, by contract with the owner or owners of record, for paying property taxes on the property and is an owner of record of a legal or equitable interest in the cooperative apartment building, other than a leasehold interest. For land improved with a life care facility, the maximum reduction from the value of the property, as equalized by the Department, shall be multiplied by the number of apartments or units occupied by persons 65 years of age or older, irrespective of any legal, equitable, or leasehold interest in the facility, who are liable, under a contract with the owner or owners of record of the facility, for paying property taxes on the property. In a cooperative or a life care facility where a homestead exemption has been granted, the cooperative association or the management firm of the cooperative or facility shall credit the savings resulting from that exemption only to the apportioned tax liability of the owner or resident who qualified for the exemption. Any person who willfully refuses to so credit the savings shall be guilty of a Class B misdemeanor. Under this Section and Section 15-175, "life care facility" means a facility as defined in Section 2 of the Life Care Facilities Act, with which the applicant for the homestead exemption has a life care contract as defined in that Act.

When a homestead exemption has been granted under this Section and the person qualifying subsequently becomes a resident of a facility licensed under the Nursing Home Care Act, the exemption shall continue so long as the residence continues to be occupied by the qualifying person's spouse if the spouse is 65 years of age or older, or if the residence remains unoccupied but is still owned by the person qualified for the homestead exemption.

A person who will be 65 years of age during the current assessment year shall be eligible to apply for the homestead exemption during that assessment year. Application shall be made during the application period in effect for the county of his residence.

Beginning with assessment year 2003, for taxes payable in 2004, property that is first occupied as a residence after January 1 of any assessment year by a person who is eligible for the senior citizens homestead exemption under this Section must be granted a pro-rata exemption for the assessment year.

The amount of the pro-rata exemption is the exemption allowed in the county under this Section divided by 365 and multiplied by the number of days during the assessment year the property is occupied as a residence by a person eligible for the exemption under this Section. The chief county assessment officer must adopt reasonable procedures to establish eligibility for this pro-rata exemption.

The assessor or chief county assessment officer may determine the eligibility of a life care facility to receive the benefits provided by this Section, by affidavit, application, visual inspection, questionnaire or other reasonable methods in order to 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 assessor may request reasonable proof that the management firm has so credited the exemption.

The chief county assessment officer of each county with less than 3,000,000 inhabitants shall provide to each person allowed a homestead exemption under this Section a form to designate any other person to receive a duplicate of any notice of delinquency in the payment of taxes assessed and levied under this Code on the property of the person receiving the exemption. The duplicate notice shall be in addition to the notice required to be provided to the person receiving the exemption, and shall be given in the manner required by this Code. The person filing the request for the duplicate notice shall pay a fee of $5 to cover administrative costs to the supervisor of assessments, who shall then file the executed designation with the county collector. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Code to the contrary, the filing of such an executed designation requires the county collector to provide duplicate notices as indicated by the designation. A designation may be rescinded by the person who executed such designation at any time, in the manner and form required by the chief county assessment officer.

The assessor or chief county assessment officer may determine the eligibility of residential property to receive the homestead exemption provided by this Section by application, visual inspection, questionnaire or other reasonable methods. The determination shall be made in accordance with guidelines established by the Department.

In all counties ~~with less than 3,000,000 inhabitants~~, the county board may by resolution provide that, if a person has been granted a homestead exemption under this Section, the person qualifying need not reapply for the exemption.

In counties with less than 3,000,000 inhabitants, if the assessor or chief county assessment officer requires annual application for verification of eligibility for an exemption once granted under this Section, the application shall be mailed to the taxpayer.

The assessor or chief county assessment officer shall notify each person who qualifies for an exemption under this Section that the person may also qualify for deferral of real estate taxes under the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Act. The notice shall set forth the qualifications needed for deferral of real estate taxes, the address and telephone number of county collector, and a statement that applications for deferral of real estate taxes may be obtained from the county collector.

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. 92-196, eff. 1-1-02; 93-511, eff. 8-11-03.)

(35 ILCS 200/15-172)

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

(a) This Section may be cited as the 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 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.

"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 Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief and Pharmaceutical Assistance 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.

"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 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 of $35,000 or less prior to taxable year 1999, ~~or~~ $40,000 or less in taxable years ~~year~~ 1999 through 2002, and $45,000 or less in taxable year 2003 and thereafter, (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 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 of $35,000 or less prior to taxable year 1999, ~~or~~ $40,000 or less in taxable years ~~year~~ 1999 through 2002, and $45,000 or less in taxable year 2003 and thereafter, (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.

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.

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 of $35,000 or less prior to taxable year 1999, ~~or~~ $40,000 or less in taxable years ~~year~~ 1999 through 2002, and $45,000 or less in taxable year 2003 and thereafter, (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 Nursing Home Care 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. The applications shall be clearly marked as applications for the Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption.

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 stating the nature and extent of the condition, that, in the physician'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 stating the nature and extent of the condition, and that, in the physician'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 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.

(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.

(e) 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. 90-14, eff. 7-1-97; 90-204, eff. 7-25-97; 90-523, eff. 11-13-97; 90-524, eff. 1-1-98; 90-531, eff. 1-1-98; 90-655, eff. 7-30-98; 91-45, eff. 6-30-99; 91-56, eff. 6-30-99; 91-819, eff. 6-13-00.)

(35 ILCS 200/15-175)

Sec. 15-175. General homestead exemption. Homestead property is entitled to an annual homestead exemption limited, except as described here with relation to cooperatives, to a reduction in the equalized assessed value of homestead property equal to the increase in equalized assessed value for the current assessment year above the equalized assessed value of the property for 1977, up to the maximum reduction set forth below. If however, the 1977 equalized assessed value upon which taxes were paid is subsequently determined by local assessing officials, the Property Tax Appeal Board, or a court to have been excessive, the equalized assessed value which should have been placed on the property for 1977 shall be used to determine the amount of the exemption.

The maximum reduction shall be $4,500 plus the additional exemption provided in this paragraph, if applicable, in counties with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants and $3,500 plus the additional exemption provided in this paragraph, if applicable, in all other counties. For owners whose qualified property has an assessed valuation that has increased by more than 20% over the previous assessed valuation of that property, there shall be an additional exemption of: $500 for owners with a household income of $30,000 or more; $1,000 for owners with a household income of $20,000 or more but less than $30,000; and $1,500 for owners with a household income of less than $20,000.

In counties with fewer than 3,000,000 inhabitants, if, based on the most recent assessment, the equalized assessed value of the homestead property for the current assessment year is greater than the equalized assessed value of the property for 1977, the owner of the property shall automatically receive the exemption granted under this Section in an amount equal to the increase over the 1977 assessment up to the maximum reduction set forth in this Section.

If in any assessment year beginning with the 2000 assessment year, homestead property has a pro-rata valuation under Section 9-180 resulting in an increase in the assessed valuation, a reduction in equalized assessed valuation equal to the increase in equalized assessed value of the property for the year of the pro-rata valuation above the equalized assessed value of the property for 1977 shall be applied to the property on a proportionate basis for the period the property qualified as homestead property during the assessment year. The maximum proportionate homestead exemption shall not exceed the maximum homestead exemption allowed in the county under this Section divided by 365 and multiplied by the number of days the property qualified as homestead property.

"Homestead property" under this Section includes residential property that is occupied by its owner or owners as his or their principal dwelling place, or that is a leasehold interest on which a single family residence is situated, which is occupied as a residence by a person who has an ownership interest therein, legal or equitable or as a lessee, and on which the person is liable for the payment of property taxes.

For land improved with an apartment building owned and operated as a cooperative or a building which is a life care facility as defined in Section 15-170 and considered to be a cooperative under Section 15-170, the maximum reduction from the equalized assessed value shall be limited to the increase in the value above the equalized assessed value of the property for 1977, up to the maximum reduction set forth above, multiplied by the number of apartments or units occupied by a person or persons who is liable, by contract with the owner or owners of record, for paying property taxes on the property and is an owner of record of a legal or equitable interest in the cooperative apartment building, other than a leasehold interest. For purposes of this Section, the term "life care facility" has the meaning stated in Section 15-170.

"Household", as used in this Section, means the owner, the spouse of the owner, and all persons using the residence of the owner as their principal place of residence.

"Household income", as used in this Section, means the combined income of the members of a household for the calendar year preceding the taxable year.

"Income", as used in this Section, has the same meaning as provided in Section 3.07 of the Senior Citizens and Disabled Persons Property Tax Relief and Pharmaceutical Assistance Act, except that "income" does not include veteran's benefits.

In a cooperative where a homestead exemption has been granted, 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 so credit the savings shall be guilty of a Class B misdemeanor.

Where married persons maintain and reside in separate residences qualifying as homestead property, each residence shall receive 50% of the total reduction in equalized assessed valuation provided by this Section.

In all counties ~~with more than 3,000,000 inhabitants~~, the assessor or chief county assessment officer may determine the

eligibility of residential property to receive the homestead exemption and the amount of the exemption by application, visual inspection, questionnaire or other reasonable methods. The determination shall be made in accordance with guidelines established by the Department, provided that the taxpayer applying for an additional general exemption under this Section shall submit to the chief county assessment officer an application with 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 issue guidelines establishing a method for verifying the accuracy of the affidavits filed by applicants under this paragraph. The applications shall be clearly marked as applications for the Additional General Homestead Exemption. In counties with fewer than 3,000,000 inhabitants, in the event of a sale of homestead property the homestead exemption shall remain in effect for the remainder of the assessment year of the sale. The assessor or chief county assessment officer may require the new owner of the property to apply for the homestead exemption for the following assessment year.
(Source: P.A. 90-368, eff. 1-1-98; 90-552, eff. 12-12-97; 90-655, eff. 7-30-98; 91-346, eff. 7-29-99.)

(35 ILCS 200/15-180)

Sec. 15-180. Homestead improvements. Homestead properties that have been improved and residential structures on homestead property that have been rebuilt following a catastrophic event are entitled to a homestead improvement exemption, limited to $30,000 per year through December 31, 1997, ~~and~~ $45,000 beginning January 1, 1998 and through December 31, 2003, and $75,000 per year for that homestead property beginning January 1, 2004 and thereafter, in fair cash value, when that property is owned and used exclusively for a residential purpose and upon demonstration that a proposed increase in assessed value is attributable solely to a new improvement of an existing structure or the rebuilding of a residential structure following a catastrophic event. To be eligible for an exemption under this Section after a catastrophic event, the residential structure must be rebuilt within 2 years after the catastrophic event. The exemption for rebuilt structures under this Section applies to the increase in value of the rebuilt structure over the value of the structure before the catastrophic event. The amount of the exemption shall be limited to the fair cash value added by the new improvement or rebuilding and shall continue for 4 years from the date the improvement or rebuilding is completed and occupied, or until the next following general assessment of that property, whichever is later.

A proclamation of disaster by the President of the United States or Governor of the State of Illinois is not a prerequisite to the classification of an occurrence as a catastrophic event under this Section. A "catastrophic event" may include an occurrence of widespread or severe damage or loss of property resulting from any catastrophic cause including but not limited to fire, including arson (provided the fire was not caused by the willful action of an owner or resident of the property), flood, earthquake, wind, storm, explosion, or extended periods of severe inclement weather. In the case of a residential structure affected by flooding, the structure shall not be eligible for this homestead improvement exemption unless it is located within a local jurisdiction which is participating in the National Flood Insurance Program.

In counties of less than 3,000,000 inhabitants, in addition to the notice requirement under Section 12-30, a supervisor of assessments, county assessor, or township or multi-township assessor responsible for adding an assessable improvement to a residential property's assessment shall either notify a taxpayer whose assessment has been changed since the last preceding assessment that he or she may be eligible for the exemption provided under this Section or shall grant the exemption automatically.

Beginning January 1, 1999, in counties of 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, an application for a homestead improvement exemption for a residential structure that has been rebuilt following a catastrophic event must be submitted to the Chief County Assessment Officer with a valuation complaint and a copy of the building permit to rebuild the structure. The Chief County Assessment Officer may require additional documentation which must be provided by the applicant.

(Source: P.A. 89-595, eff. 1-1-97; 89-690, eff. 6-1-97; 90-14, eff. 7-1-97; 90-186, eff. 7-24-97; 90-655, eff. 7-30-98; 90-704, eff. 8-7-98.)

Section 90. The State Mandates Act is amended by adding Section 8.28 as follows:

(30 ILCS 805/8.28 new)

Sec. 8.28. Exempt mandate. Notwithstanding Sections 6 and 8 of this Act, no reimbursement by the State is required for the implementation of any mandate created by the Senior Citizens Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption under Section 15-172 of the Property Tax Code.

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