

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 27, 2010

Contact: Anne Atkins
(804) 371-0441

Voters to Decide on Real Estate Tax Relief for Disabled Veterans

RICHMOND— Next Tuesday, voters will be asked to vote on a proposed amendment to the Virginia Constitution to provide real estate tax relief for 100% service-connected disabled veterans. If the amendment is passed, the General Assembly would then pass a law requiring localities to grant real estate tax exemptions without means testing to veterans with a 100% permanent and total service-connected disability.

Qualifying veterans would be exempt from paying real estate taxes only on owner-occupied property used as the sole dwelling of the veteran. Vacation homes and rental property would not be exempt. Under this exemption, a veteran's surviving spouse also would be eligible for the exemption as long as he or she continues to use the home as his or her principal residence and does not remarry.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported that 7,358 Virginia veterans had a 100% service-connected disability rating as of May 2009. However, not all of these veterans own homes.

Approval by Virginia's voters is the final step in a three-step process to amend the state constitution. A constitutional amendment is required since this tax exemption creates a special class of exemptions. A constitutional amendment requires the General Assembly to pass the proposed amendment two consecutive years as well as passage by voters. The amendment passed unanimously in both houses during the 2009 and 2010 legislative sessions. This year's bills were sponsored by Senators Puller and Stuart (SJ13), Delegate O'Bannon (HJ33), Senator Puller (SB31) and Delegate O'Bannon (HB149).

“We're really pushing for veterans, their families, and the public to vote ‘yes’ for the real estate tax exemption for veterans with a 100% service-connected disability,” said Paul Galanti, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. Tax relief can be significant for the service men and

women who return from deployment with severe injuries. Often, they face a lifetime of pain, disability, limited employment opportunities, and financial strain,” Galanti added.

If passed by voters, the exemption will take effect January 1, 2011.

#