

News Release

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Voters to Decide on Real Estate Tax Relief for Disabled Veterans in November

RICHMOND— On November 2, 2010, 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 approved, local governments would grant real estate tax exemptions without means testing to veterans with a 100% service-connected disability rating. 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. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs reported that 7,358 Virginia veterans had a 100% service-connected disability rating as of May 2009.

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).

Daniel Boyer, Chairman of the Joint Leadership Council of Veterans Service Organizations (JLC), acknowledged that localities may be concerned about the loss of revenue that might occur as a result of this bill. "However, many localities already grant real estate tax exemptions to disabled veterans and the elderly," said Boyer. "The 23 Veterans Service Organizations represented on the JLC

have over 250,000 members,” he added. “This is our top priority for 2010, and we hope the voters of Virginia will support us.”

“We’re really going to be 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 rating,” said Paul Galanti, Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Veterans Services. “Veterans rated as 100% disabled continue to suffer from disabilities incurred during active military service to our Nation and the Commonwealth. They’ve taken time out of their lives to defend our freedoms. They’ve served us; now it’s our turn to serve them,” Galanti added.

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

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