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Catch-all comments for work session on bills to refine the act for Stabilization of property taxes of individuals 65 years of age or older.

Several bills have proposed increasing the Homestead Exemption currently awarded to seniors. However, as a general principle, such an exemption could unevenly affect towns and taxpayers with drastically different tax bases, mil rates, and population change. In most cases, the towns may be paying taxpayers for events that have not happened yet.

For a growing town with already high real estate values, a \$50,000 or \$75,000 exemption, although having some cost to the town, may have no benefit to the town if taxes are unlikely to rise much higher. It rewards wealthy taxpayers who have no risk of being taxed out of their homes.

For small towns with low and diminishing real estate values and residents moving away, such a large exemption could break the town by providing taxpayers a windfall. Tax payments would fall when the risk of rising tax evaluations is unlikely.

I do not understand the gyrations of state reimbursements to towns for various reasons, but I have seen the effects on exemptions for my home. Our mil rate increased in tax year 21/22 from 20.55 to 21.77, so other taxpayers' taxes increased accordingly. I also paid based on that same mil rate increase, but I must have paid even more because my Homestead and Veterans' exemptions were decreased by \$1500 and \$360, respectively. The tax assessor explained it away because the town is "undervalued." It strikes me that the elderly and veterans must be paying more of an increase than other taxpayers.

The above is not a complaint about amounts that small. Instead, it illustrates what could happen to an exemption at the whim of the town or the state. For example, could "the system" reduce a \$50,000 homestead exemption to \$30,000 whenever the town/state decides to even things up? What assurance do we have? Can we expect an expert from the Bureau of Taxation to explain how exceptions can be changed? All this leads me to summarize that increased homestead exemptions appear to be on shaky ground and provide uneven benefits to towns and taxpayers before any actual valuations occur, if they occur at all.

Therefore, I'll argue that the simplest and fairest approach to all is to retain the existing language of Title 36 Chapter 908-B § 6281, except that section 4, Transfer of eligibility, should be deleted and not replaced with anything further.

I'll repeat my emphasis that the changes to towns and taxpayers will only occur when and if a property evaluation causes a change in evaluation for a qualified individual.