

Marc Perry
Lamoine
LD 264

As a licensed Assessor (CMA #814) for 16+ years, I can tell you without equivocation, eliminating the 12 month requirement for the Homestead Exemption (HE) to be applied, will allow for property owners to benefit from this exemption in two different municipalities within the same tax year, which is not the true intention of this exemption.

You can only have one (1) primary residence at a time for which the HE can be applied.

Even if Assessors do their due diligence and call the (Maine) municipality from which the property owner may have had a previous HE, to see if it was removed or request that it be removed since they are applying for the HE in the new town, that HE may have still been attached to the property and committed for taxes, giving them that benefit in that Town, for that tax year.

If this passes, property owners could apply for the HE in a new town, have it applied to their assessment which may have a tax commitment date that is later in the year than the previous Town's commitment? Hence, giving them the HE for two tax commitments in the same tax year.

I acknowledge the 12 month waiting period can negatively affect some property owners' ability to benefit from this exemption in a timely manner.

Of note, the 12 month waiting period is also complicated by the requirement that it's 12 months "as of" April 1st. If a property is purchased in May (or anytime after April 1), and the property owner did NOT have a previous HE on a Maine property, that owner wouldn't qualify for the HE for (essentially) two (2) years.

Changing the "12 months as of April 1" would eliminate this occurrence (which is quite often). Keeping it 12 months is fine, but change it to "12 months prior to tax commitment for the municipality for which the HE is being applied PROVIDED the applicant did NOT receive the HE in another municipality for the same tax year's commitment (which is very easy to verify).

Allowing non-Mainers who are establishing a new primary residence (in Maine) to benefit from the HE as long as they attest to it being their primary residence prior to taxes being committed for their new hometown, would be an extremely public friendly rule change. If they miss the commitment date deadline, they'll know they'll get it the following year (without question) which would be received as an acceptable consequence, i.e. a win win and also very easy to administer for the Assessors.

It's important for the committee members to have more insight to the nuances or caveats of current laws or programs affecting the practical implications of such programs, in order to formulate the best language and direction(s) that these types of laws or changes to laws will ultimately impact not only property owners but also the professionals (such as Assessors) who approve (or deny) or delay implementation of laws, such as Homestead Exemptions.

Thanks for listening.