

# **Gov. Pritzker Signs Bill Accelerating Multi-Year Senior Homestead Exemption**

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**CHICAGO** — Governor JB Pritzker signed legislation today accelerating the multi-year senior homestead exemption in Cook County ahead of the March 3 deadline for the first installment of 2019 property taxes.

“This legislation hits at the heart of one of the most essential tenets of my administration: streamlining the bureaucratic hurdles that prevent too many of our residents, especially seniors, from accessing the benefits they deserve – particularly when it comes to alleviating their property tax burden,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Today, with this new law, we’re extending the automatic renewal of the Senior Citizen

Homestead Exemption, eliminating the bureaucratic process for the hundreds of thousands of Cook County seniors, many of whom live on a fixed income, who have earned their retirement and deserve some property tax stability.”

Moving the start date of the program from Tax Year 2020 to Tax Year 2019, Cook County seniors who currently claim the exemption and those who apply for the exemption this year will be automatically renewed each year going forward. The multi-year exemption was originally passed in the 2019 regular legislative session, and Gov. Pritzker signed it into law in August 2019.

“Skyrocketing property taxes are hurting local seniors, many of whom live on fixed incomes. Last year we learned that more than 25,000 seniors in Cook County did not file for cost-saving exemptions,” said House Assistant Majority Leader Fred Crespo (D-Hoffman Estates). “This legislation will reduce bureaucratic hurdles and red tape that seniors face, ensuring they receive much needed relief without having to reapply every year.”

“This bill is an opportunity to test a more efficient process while still providing the same or better level of service,” said Sen. Laura Ellman (D-Naperville). “This particular example prioritizes the needs of seniors on fixed-incomes and ensures awareness of relief programs available to our older population. I will continue to seek more efficient processes that serve Illinoisans.”

“With the signing of this new law, I am pleased to see our state government speaking with one voice. Through intergovernmental cooperation and technological modernization within our office, seniors in Cook County will no longer be burdened with the need to reaffirm their age each year,” said Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi. “I’m grateful to Representative Crespo for his continued advocacy on this issue. With necessary safeguards in place to prevent fraud, our office is implementing this bill now for the hundreds of thousands of seniors who are eligible for it.”

After years of unpredictable funding gaps during the prior administration, Gov. Pritzker has sought to bring stability into the lives of Illinois seniors.

The FY20 state budget increased funding for Alzheimer’s services by \$1 million and home-delivered meals by \$2 million and funded a full-time dementia coordinator position at the Department of Public Health. The Pritzker administration has also raised the income eligibility for the Department on Aging’s Benefit Access Program, which allows for reduced cost license plates and free rides on public transit, for the first time in a decade; expanded the number of Supportive Living Facilities with dementia care units from 5 to 45; and improved quality of care for seniors through better funding for nursing home and in-home care. In addition, Gov. Pritzker named 22 people to the Elder Abuse

Task Force, which will develop a long-term plan to combat patterns of abuse and improve outcomes for older Illinoisans.

According to the Cook County Assessor's Office, approximately 250,000 seniors currently receive the exemption, and the maximum amount of the reduction in equalized assessed value is \$8,000 in Cook County.

House Bill 961 takes effect immediately.