

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1408

As Passed House:

March 12, 2001

Title: An act relating to a property tax exemption for widows or widowers of honorably discharged veterans.

Brief Description: Providing a property tax exemption to widows or widowers of honorably discharged veterans.

Sponsors: By Representatives Reardon, Talcott, D. Schmidt, Conway, Haigh, Bush, Mielke, Hatfield, Campbell, Barlean, Berkey and Rockefeller; by request of Joint Select Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Finance: 2/15/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/12/01, 98-0.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Creates a new property tax relief program for retired widows or widowers of war time veterans.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Cairnes, Republican Co-Chair; Morris, Democratic Co-Chair; Berkey, Democratic Vice Chair; Roach, Republican Vice Chair; Carrell, Conway, Pennington, Santos, Van Luven and Veloria.

Staff: Rick Peterson (786-7150).

Background:

All real and personal property in this state is subject to property tax each year based on its value, unless a specific exemption is provided by law.

Some senior citizens and persons retired, due to disability, are entitled to property tax

relief on their principal residences. To qualify, a person must be 61 years old in the year of application or retired from employment because of a physical disability, own his or her principal residence, and have a disposable income of less than \$30,000 a year. Persons meeting these criteria are entitled to partial property tax exemptions and a valuation freeze.

Summary of Bill:

Retired widows or widowers of certain veterans are eligible for property tax relief on their principal residence according to the following schedule:

Income less than \$32,000	Exempt from all property taxes on first \$200,000 of value
Income between \$32,000 and \$40,000	Exempt from all property taxes on first \$150,000 of value
Income between \$40,000 and \$50,000	Exempt from all property taxes on first \$100,000 of value

In addition, the assessed value of the residence of all eligible widows and widowers is frozen at the value on January 1, 2001 or the value when first eligible for the program.

Eligible persons must be at least age 61 when they apply for relief and must be widows or widowers of veterans that: died as a result of a service-connected disability; were rated as 100 percent disabled for the 10 years prior to death; were prisoners of war and rated as 100 percent disabled for at least one year prior to death, or died in active military training status.

Veterans are persons who were honorably discharged or discharged for physical reasons with an honorable record from the armed forces of the United States and served during periods of war. Women's air force service pilots and certain merchant mariners are eligible.

Eligible persons cannot remarry.

The procedures for application and calculation of income are the same as for the current senior citizen and persons retired due to disability property tax relief program.

This change first applies to property tax due for collection in 2002.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 06, 2001.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is a recommendation of the Joint Select Committee on Military Affairs. This bill is long overdue. We have lagged behind other states - 37 states provide some assistance. Spouses lose a minimum of 60 percent of their income when the veteran dies. The survivor cannot carry on the expense of the home when the property tax bill arrives. It is important to provide property tax relief so they can stay in their homes.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Conway; Tony Woods, Veterans Legislative Coalition; and Dan Gogerty, Veterans Legislative Coalition.