S-4255.1

SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6084

State of Washington 63rd Legislature 2014 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban, Hill, and Brown)

READ FIRST TIME 02/04/14.

AN ACT Relating to property tax exemptions for service-connected disabled veterans and senior citizens; amending RCW 84.36.381 and 84.38.030; and creating new sections.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** This section is the tax preference performance statement for the tax preference contained in sections 2 and 3 of this act. This performance statement is only intended to be used for subsequent evaluation of the tax preference. It is not intended to create a private right of action by any party or be used to determine eligibility for preferential tax treatment.

(1) The legislature categorizes this tax preference as one intended to provide tax relief for certain businesses or individuals, as indicated in RCW 82.32.808(2)(e).

(2) It is the legislature's specific public policy objective to provide tax relief to senior citizens, disabled persons, and veterans. The legislature recognizes that property taxes impose a substantial financial burden on those with fixed incomes and that property tax relief programs have considerable value in addressing this burden. It

is the legislature's intent to increase the static income thresholds set forth in these tax preferences in order to reflect inflation that has occurred since the income thresholds were last raised in 2004.

(3) The increase of the income threshold is meant to be permanent and, therefore, not subject to the ten-year expiration provision in RCW 82.32.805(1)(a).

Sec. 2. RCW 84.36.381 and 2012 c 10 s 73 are each amended to read as follows:

A person is exempt from any legal obligation to pay all or a portion of the amount of excess and regular real property taxes due and payable in the year following the year in which a claim is filed, and thereafter, in accordance with the following:

(1) The property taxes must have been imposed upon a residence which was occupied by the person claiming the exemption as a principal place of residence as of the time of filing. However, any person who sells, transfers, or is displaced from his or her residence may transfer his or her exemption status to a replacement residence, but no claimant may receive an exemption on more than one residence in any year. Moreover, confinement of the person to a hospital, nursing home, assisted living facility, or adult family home does not disqualify the claim of exemption if:

(a) The residence is temporarily unoccupied;

(b) The residence is occupied by a spouse or a domestic partner and/or a person financially dependent on the claimant for support; or

(c) The residence is rented for the purpose of paying nursing home, hospital, assisted living facility, or adult family home costs;

(2) The person claiming the exemption must have owned, at the time of filing, in fee, as a life estate, or by contract purchase, the residence on which the property taxes have been imposed or if the person claiming the exemption lives in a cooperative housing association, corporation, or partnership, such person must own a share therein representing the unit or portion of the structure in which he or she resides. For purposes of this subsection, a residence owned by a marital community or state registered domestic partnership or owned by cotenants is deemed to be owned by each spouse or each domestic partner or each cotenant, and any lease for life is deemed a life estate;

(3)(a) The person claiming the exemption must be:

(i) Sixty-one years of age or older on December 31st of the year in which the exemption claim is filed, or must have been, at the time of filing, retired from regular gainful employment by reason of disability; or

(ii) A veteran of the armed forces of the United States entitled to and receiving compensation from the United States department of veterans affairs at a total disability rating for a service-connected disability.

(b) However, any surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner of a person who was receiving an exemption at the time of the person's death will qualify if the surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner is fifty-seven years of age or older and otherwise meets the requirements of this section;

(4) The amount that the person is exempt from an obligation to pay is calculated on the basis of combined disposable income, as defined in RCW 84.36.383. If the person claiming the exemption was retired for two months or more of the assessment year, the combined disposable income of such person must be calculated by multiplying the average monthly combined disposable income of such person during the months such person was retired by twelve. If the income of the person claiming exemption is reduced for two or more months of the assessment year by reason of the death of the person's spouse or the person's domestic partner, or when other substantial changes occur in disposable income that are likely to continue for an indefinite period of time, the combined disposable income of such person must be calculated by multiplying the average monthly combined disposable income of such person after such occurrences by twelve. If it is necessary to estimate income to comply with this subsection, the assessor may require confirming documentation of such income prior to May 31 of the year following application;

(5)(a) A person who otherwise qualifies under this section and has a combined disposable income of ((~~thirty-five~~)) <u>forty</u> thousand dollars or less is exempt from all excess property taxes; and

(b)(i) A person who otherwise qualifies under this section and has a combined disposable income of ((~~thirty~~)) <u>thirty-five</u> thousand dollars or less but greater than ((~~twenty-five~~)) <u>thirty</u> thousand dollars is exempt from all regular property taxes on the greater of fifty thousand dollars or thirty-five percent of the valuation of his or her residence, but not to exceed seventy thousand dollars of the valuation of his or her residence; or

(ii) A person who otherwise qualifies under this section and has a combined disposable income of ((~~twenty-five~~)) thirty thousand dollars or less is exempt from all regular property taxes on the greater of sixty thousand dollars or sixty percent of the valuation of his or her residence;

(6)(a) For a person who otherwise qualifies under this section and has a combined disposable income of ((~~thirty-five~~)) forty thousand dollars or less, the valuation of the residence is the assessed value of the residence on the later of January 1, 1995, or January 1st of the assessment year the person first qualifies under this section. If the person subsequently fails to qualify under this section only for one year because of high income, this same valuation must be used upon requalification. If the person fails to qualify for more than one year in succession because of high income or fails to qualify for any other reason, the valuation upon requalification is the assessed value on January 1st of the assessment year in which the person requalifies. If the person transfers the exemption under this section to a different residence, the valuation of the different residence is the assessed value of the different residence on January 1st of the assessment year in which the person transfers the exemption.

(b) In no event may the valuation under this subsection be greater than the true and fair value of the residence on January 1st of the assessment year.

(c) This subsection does not apply to subsequent improvements to the property in the year in which the improvements are made. Subsequent improvements to the property must be added to the value otherwise determined under this subsection at their true and fair value in the year in which they are made.

Sec. 3. RCW 84.38.030 and 2008 c 6 s 702 are each amended to read as follows:

A claimant may defer payment of special assessments and/or real property taxes on up to eighty percent of the amount of the claimant's equity value in the claimant's residence if the following conditions are met:

(1) The claimant must meet all requirements for an exemption for the residence under RCW 84.36.381, other than the age and income limits under RCW 84.36.381.

(2) The claimant must be sixty years of age or older on December 31st of the year in which the deferral claim is filed, or must have been, at the time of filing, retired from regular gainful employment by reason of physical disability((~~: PROVIDED, That~~)). However, any surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner of a person who was receiving a deferral at the time of the person's death shall qualify if the surviving spouse or surviving domestic partner is fifty-seven years of age or older and otherwise meets the requirements of this section.

(3) The claimant must have a combined disposable income, as defined in RCW 84.36.383, of ((~~forty~~)) forty-five thousand dollars or less.

(4) The claimant must have owned, at the time of filing, the residence on which the special assessment and/or real property taxes have been imposed. For purposes of this subsection, a residence owned by a marital community, owned by domestic partners, or owned by cotenants shall be deemed to be owned by each spouse, each domestic partner, or each cotenant. A claimant who has only a share ownership in cooperative housing, a life estate, a lease for life, or a revocable trust does not satisfy the ownership requirement.

(5) The claimant must have and keep in force fire and casualty insurance in sufficient amount to protect the interest of the state in the claimant's equity value((~~: PROVIDED, That~~)). However, if the claimant fails to keep fire and casualty insurance in force to the extent of the state's interest in the claimant's equity value, the amount deferred ((~~shall~~)) may not exceed one hundred percent of the claimant's equity value in the land or lot only.

(6) In the case of special assessment deferral, the claimant must have opted for payment of such special assessments on the installment method if such method was available.

NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** This act applies to taxes levied for collection in 2015 and thereafter.

--- END ---