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Reynolds Advocates Change on Behalf of Disabled Vets General Assembly Amends Homestead Law

HAMILTON – Butler County Auditor Roger Reynolds is pleased to announce that more disabled veterans will be able to qualify for the Homestead Exemption this coming year than ever before thanks to the passage of Amended Senate Bill 10 on Dec. 9.

Reynolds advocated for a change to the definition of “disabled veteran” in the Homestead law because it was too restrictive. Veterans fully compensated by the Department of Veterans Affairs due to their inability to hold gainful employment because of their service-connected disability or disabilities will now qualify. These vets were left out of the Homestead program last year.

“When the double Homestead benefit was granted to disabled veterans last year we quickly found out there was a problem,” said Reynolds. “In many cases veterans were compensated at a 100 percent rate by the VA because their injuries left them unable to work, but their disability rating wasn’t 100 percent. The tax commissioner ruled county auditors could only consider the disability rating. That had to change because it just wasn’t right.”

The expanded definition sought by Reynolds was added to Senate Bill 10 in the House Armed Services, Veterans Affairs and Public Safety Committee by Rep. Lou Terhar of Cincinnati this summer. Amended SB 10 was unanimously passed 94-0 by the full House on Dec. 1 and the Senate vote was 33-0 on Wednesday. The bill now awaits Gov. Kasich’s signature and applies to tax year 2015 and thereafter.

“I’m thrilled that Rep. Terhar agreed with our concerns and that the General Assembly moved to remedy this situation,” said Reynolds.

An analysis by the Legislative Services Commission, citing the Department of Veterans Services, reported that Ohio has 7,338 veterans with an individual unemployability rating but not a 100 percent service-connected disability rating. This group of veterans represents the population affected by Amended Senate Bill 10.

Qualifying Ohio veterans, regardless of age or income, may shield up to \$50,000 of the market value of their home from taxation through the Homestead Exemption. The savings vary by taxing district but average out to about \$850 per year in Butler County. In some taxing districts, veterans will save more than \$1,000 per year.

Disabled veterans applying for the exemption should use Form DTE 105I, which is available on the Auditor’s website at www.butlercountyauditor.org. Just click on the Homestead Exemption

link located on the Auditor's home page. The annual deadline to apply is June 1.

The regular Homestead Exemption (DTE 105A) shields up to \$25,000 of the market value of a home from taxation. The exemption is limited to the "homestead," which Ohio law defines as an owner's dwelling, including up to one acre of adjacent land.

The maximum allowable income for those eligible is \$31,000 for the 2015 Tax Year (payable 2016) and \$31,500 for the 2016 Tax Year (payable in 2016 for those with a manufactured or mobile home). Income is defined as the Ohio Adjusted Gross Income (OAGI) of the applicant and the applicant's spouse and the OAGI can be found on line 3 of the Ohio Income Tax Return.

For more information, call the Auditor's Office at 887-3154.