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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 386

Offered January 10, 2007

Prefiled January 10, 2007

Proposing an amendment to Section 6 of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia, relating to property taxes; exemptions; and local tax relief programs.

Patron—Wagner

Referred to Committee on Privileges and Elections

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, a majority of the members elected to each house agreeing, That the following amendment to the Constitution of Virginia be, and the same hereby is, proposed and referred to the General Assembly at its first regular session held after the next general election of members of the House of Delegates for its concurrence in conformity with the provisions of Section 1 of Article XII of the Constitution of Virginia, namely:

Amend Section 6 of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia as follows:

ARTICLE X

TAXATION AND FINANCE

Section 6. Exempt property.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this Constitution, the following property and no other shall be exempt from taxation, State and local, including inheritance taxes:

(1) Property owned directly or indirectly by the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof, and obligations of the Commonwealth or any political subdivision thereof exempt by law.

(2) Real estate and personal property owned and exclusively occupied or used by churches or religious bodies for religious worship or for the residences of their ministers.

(3) Private or public burying grounds or cemeteries, provided the same are not operated for profit.

(4) Property owned by public libraries or by institutions of learning not conducted for profit, so long as such property is primarily used for literary, scientific, or educational purposes or purposes incidental thereto. This provision may also apply to leasehold interests in such property as may be provided by general law.

(5) Intangible personal property, or any class or classes thereof, as may be exempted in whole or in part by general law.

(6) Property used by its owner for religious, charitable, patriotic, historical, benevolent, cultural, or public park and playground purposes, as may be provided by classification or designation by an ordinance adopted by the local governing body and subject to such restrictions and conditions as provided by general law.

(7) Land subject to a perpetual easement permitting inundation by water as may be exempted in whole or in part by general law.

(b) ~~The General Assembly may by general law authorize the governing body of any county, city, town, or regional government to provide for the exemption from local property taxation, or a portion thereof, within such restrictions and upon such conditions as may be prescribed, of real estate and personal property designed for continuous habitation owned by, and occupied as the sole dwelling of, persons not less than sixty-five years of age or persons permanently and totally disabled as established by general law who are deemed by the General Assembly to be bearing an extraordinary tax burden on said property in relation to their income and financial worth. Any county, city, town, or regional government may by local ordinance, within such restrictions and upon such conditions as may be prescribed in the ordinance, provide tax relief for real estate and personal property designed for continuous habitation owned by, and occupied as the sole dwelling of, persons not less than sixty-five years of age or persons permanently and totally disabled. Tax relief means provisions in the local ordinance that (i) limit or prohibit increases in local property taxes on such real estate and personal property or (ii) provide for an exemption or deferral from local property taxation, or a portion thereof, for such real estate and personal property. The General Assembly may, by general law, define persons who are permanently and totally disabled.~~

(c) Except as to property of the Commonwealth and property described in subsection (b) above, the General Assembly by general law may restrict or condition, in whole or in part, but not extend, any or all of the above exemptions.

(d) The General Assembly may define as a separate subject of taxation any property, including real or personal property, equipment, facilities, or devices, used primarily for the purpose of abating or preventing pollution of the atmosphere or waters of the Commonwealth or for the purpose of

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59 transferring or storing solar energy, and by general law may allow the governing body of any county,
60 city, town, or regional government to exempt or partially exempt such property from taxation, or by
61 general law may directly exempt or partially exempt such property from taxation.

62 (e) The General Assembly may define as a separate subject of taxation household goods, personal
63 effects and tangible farm property and products, and by general law may allow the governing body of
64 any county, city, town, or regional government to exempt or partially exempt such property from
65 taxation, or by general law may directly exempt or partially exempt such property from taxation.

66 (f) Exemptions of property from taxation as established or authorized hereby shall be strictly
67 construed; provided, however, that all property exempt from taxation on the effective date of this section
68 shall continue to be exempt until otherwise provided by the General Assembly as herein set forth.

69 (g) The General Assembly may by general law authorize any county, city, town, or regional
70 government to impose a service charge upon the owners of a class or classes of exempt property for
71 services provided by such governments.

72 (h) The General Assembly may by general law authorize the governing body of any county, city,
73 town, or regional government to provide for a partial exemption from local real property taxation, within
74 such restrictions and upon such conditions as may be prescribed, (i) of real estate whose improvements,
75 by virtue of age and use, have undergone substantial renovation, rehabilitation or replacement or (ii) of
76 real estate with new structures and improvements in conservation, redevelopment, or rehabilitation areas.

77 (i) The General Assembly may by general law allow the governing body of any county, city, or town
78 to exempt or partially exempt from taxation any generating equipment installed after December
79 thirty-one, nineteen hundred seventy-four, for the purpose of converting from oil or natural gas to coal
80 or to wood, wood bark, wood residue, or to any other alternate energy source for manufacturing, and
81 any co-generation equipment installed since such date for use in manufacturing.

82 (j) The General Assembly may by general law allow the governing body of any county, city, or town
83 to have the option to exempt or partially exempt from taxation any business, occupational or
84 professional license or any merchants' capital, or both.