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SENATE BILL NO. 540

Offered January 13, 2012

A BILL to amend and reenact § 58.1-3219.5 of the Code of Virginia, relating to real property tax exemption for disabled veterans.

Patrons—Puller, Marsden and Reeves

Referred to Committee on Finance

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That § 58.1-3219.5 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:**

§ 58.1-3219.5. Exemption from taxes on property for disabled veterans.

A. Pursuant to Article X, Section 6-A of the Constitution of Virginia, and for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2011, the General Assembly hereby exempts from taxation the real property, including the joint real property of husband and wife, of any veteran who has been rated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or its successor agency pursuant to federal law to have a 100 percent service-connected, permanent, and total disability, and who occupies the real property as his principal place of residence.

B. The surviving spouse of a veteran eligible for the exemption set forth in this article shall also qualify for the exemption, so long as the death of the veteran occurs on or after January 1, 2011, the surviving spouse does not remarry, and the surviving spouse continues to occupy the real property as his principal place of residence.

C. A county, city, or town shall provide for the exemption from real property taxes the qualifying dwelling pursuant to this section, and shall provide for the exemption from real property taxes the land, not exceeding one acre, upon which it is situated. However, if a county, city, or town provides for an exemption from or deferral of real property taxes of more than one acre of land pursuant to Article 2 (§ 58.1-3210 et seq.) of this chapter, then the county, city, or town shall also provide an exemption for the same number of acres pursuant to this section.

D. For purposes of this exemption, real property of any veteran includes real property (i) held by a veteran alone or in conjunction with the veteran's spouse as tenant or tenants for life or joint lives, (ii) held in a revocable inter vivos trust over which the veteran or the veteran and his spouse hold the power of revocation, or (iii) held in an irrevocable trust under which a veteran alone or in conjunction with his spouse possesses a life estate or an estate for joint lives or enjoys a continuing right of use or support. The term does not include any interest held under a leasehold or term of years.

The exemption for a surviving spouse under subsection B includes real property (a) held by the veteran's spouse as tenant for life, (b) held in a revocable inter vivos trust over which the surviving spouse holds the power of revocation, or (c) held in an irrevocable trust under which the surviving spouse possesses a life estate or enjoys a continuing right of use or support. The exemption does not apply to any interest held under a leasehold or term of years.

E. 1. In the event that (i) a person is entitled to an exemption under this section by virtue of holding the property in any of the three ways set forth in subsection D and (ii) one or more other persons have an ownership interest in the property that permits them to occupy the property, then the tax exemption for the property that otherwise would have been provided shall be prorated by multiplying the amount of the exemption by a fraction that has as a numerator the number of people who are qualified for the exemption pursuant to this section and has as a denominator the total number of all people having an ownership interest that permits them to occupy the property.

2. In the event that the primary residence is jointly owned by two or more individuals, not all of whom qualify for the exemption pursuant to subsection A or B, and no person is entitled to the exemption under this section by virtue of holding the property in any of the three ways set forth in subsection D, then the exemption shall be prorated by multiplying the amount of the exemption or deferral by a fraction that has as a numerator the percentage of ownership interest in the dwelling held by all such joint owners who qualify for the exemption pursuant to subsections A and B, and as a denominator, 100 percent.

2. That the provisions of this act are declaratory of existing law.

3. That real property taxes paid for tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2011, on real property held in trust under the provisions of this act shall be refunded by the locality to the taxpayer.

4. That should any portion of this act be held unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remaining portions of this act shall remain in effect.

INTRODUCED

SB540

