

## **DRAMATICALLY HIGHER TAX SAVINGS FOR SOME DISABLED VETERANS TAKES EFFECT**

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Under a new law taking effect this year, veterans of the US Armed Forces who were severely wounded while serving their country will no longer be required to pay property taxes in Illinois.

A property tax exemption for disabled veterans has been in effect since 2007, but the law taking effect this year applies to more disabled veterans and provides greater tax savings than was the case in prior years. Under the new law, the most severely wounded veterans will not pay any property taxes at all. "Given these changes," Oak Park Township Assessor Ali ElSaffar said, "I urge all disabled veterans to check the eligibility requirements under the new law."

**Eligibility Rules and Tax Savings.** To qualify for the Disabled Veterans Exemption, a property must be owned and occupied by a disabled veteran, and the veteran must have a disability that is connected to military service. The law requires that the service-connected disability be certified by the US Department of Veterans Affairs, which determines the extent of a veteran's disability. The chart below reflects the savings taking effect this year:

<u>Level of Disability</u>	<u>Tax Savings</u>
70% or more	Veteran's home is completely exempt from property tax
50%-69%	\$5,000 in Equalized Assessed Value (about \$615 in savings in Oak Park)
30%-49%	\$2,500 in Equalized Assessed Value (about \$307 in savings in Oak Park)
0%-29%	No tax savings for this level of disability

Houses with very high market values (\$917,000 or more last year) are not eligible for the exemption. It should also be noted that if a disabled veteran dies and is survived by a spouse, the surviving spouse can retain the Disabled Veterans Exemption until the survivor remarries.

**First Installment Bills.** First installment tax bills are issued before any exemptions are calculated. This means that disabled veterans who are completely exempt from paying taxes this year will nonetheless receive a first installment tax bill that is 55% of their total property tax bill from last year. Once second installment bills come out in July, however, these veterans will be eligible for a refund of the amount paid for the first installment. Veterans with questions about first installment bills should call the Township Assessor's office.

**Application Information.** All veterans who received the Disabled Veterans Exemption last year will receive renewal forms in late January, and must return them by March 2. The renewal applications must include a letter from the Department of Veterans Affairs dated after January 1, 2015 that verifies the veteran's level of disability.

Those who did not apply for the exemption last year will not get an application in the mail. "In the past, veterans with disabilities of 50% or less were not eligible for the exemption, but eligibility now starts at a disability level of 30%," Assessor ElSaffar said. "These newly eligible veterans, along with any other disabled veteran, can call my office if they have questions about the exemption or need help completing the application."

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