

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
To Be Voted on at the November 2, 2010, Election

Article X, Taxation and Finance.
Section 6, Exempt Property.

BALLOT QUESTION

Question: Shall Section 6 of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia be amended to authorize legislation that will permit localities to establish their own income or financial worth limitations for purposes of granting property tax relief for homeowners not less than 65 years of age or permanently and totally disabled?

EXPLANATION

Present Law

Under the Constitution, the General Assembly may give localities the power to grant full or partial exemptions from real estate taxes to persons 65 years of age or older or for persons permanently and totally disabled. The exemption applies to owner-occupied property used as the sole dwelling of such persons. The exemption is currently available only to such persons who bear "an extraordinary tax burden" in relation to their income and financial worth.

Proposed Amendment

The proposed amendment (i) removes the requirement that tax exemptions are available only to such persons who bear "an extraordinary tax burden," and (ii) gives the General Assembly authority to permit localities to determine their own income or financial worth limitations for tax exemptions for persons 65 years of age or older or for persons permanently and totally disabled.

FULL TEXT OF AMENDMENT [Proposed new language is underlined. Existing language that is deleted is shown as stricken (~~stricken~~).]

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.~~ A local governing body may be authorized to establish either income or financial worth limitations, or both, in order to qualify for such relief.

(c) Except as to property of the Commonwealth, 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 transferring or storing solar energy, and by general law may allow the governing body of any county, city, town, or regional

government to exempt or partially exempt such property from taxation, or by general law may directly exempt or partially exempt such property from taxation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Explanation word count: 136