



County of Hamilton

DUSTY RHODES

AUDITOR

COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
138 EAST COURT STREET
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45202

NEWS RELEASE

FROM: Dusty Rhodes, Hamilton County Auditor (513-946-4047)

Rules Tightened for Homestead Exemption

According to Hamilton County Auditor, Dusty Rhodes, the State Legislature has limited eligibility through an income qualifier for the Real Estate Tax Homestead Exemption for most new applicants after January 1, 2014.

Rhodes says that this clamp-down is yet another in a series of moves made by the state to offload expenditures onto local governments and citizens. Other changes made in the past two years include more than a 50% cut of state funding to counties, municipalities, and townships and elimination of 12 ½% rollbacks on new or replacement levies on owner-occupied residential property taxes. Taken together, these cuts will literally save the state (and revert these costs back to citizens and communities) well over a billion dollars annually with that amount growing every year due to new levies coming on, the death of current Homestead recipients, and the potential growth in state tax revenues.

Under the current version of the law, taxpayers already receiving the Homestead exemption (normally worth around \$300 to \$400 per year for a homeowner) will be "grandfathered" and will be eligible to receive the break going forward... unless there is a change in their status such as not owning and living in an Ohio residence or no longer being classed as totally disabled.

Special attention should be taken by those who turned 65 before January 1, 2014 and have not yet filed the first time for Homestead exemption. You have a one-time opportunity to apply and be approved without income qualification as long as you own and live in the same home that you did on January 1, 2013. Such "late application" must be received at the Auditor's Office on or before June 2, 2014.

New applicants becoming eligible by age or disability after January 1, 2014 will now need to meet an income test to be approved for the Homestead exemption.

A taxpayer and spouse with an individual or joint household Ohio Adjusted Gross Income (OAGI) of more than \$30,500 on their 2013 state income tax return will not be eligible for the exemption in the current year. If, in the future, the taxpayer(s) report an income below the eligibility threshold, the exemption may be approved for that year. New Homestead applicants who are not required to file an Ohio Income Tax return must submit appropriate documentation to the County Auditor to prove income eligibility.

It should be noted that Ohio Adjusted Gross Income is not necessarily the same as the total income received in a household. Receipt of Social Security benefits would be a major example of an income source not considered for OAGI and thus not affecting eligibility for the Homestead exemption.

The normal filing period for the Homestead exemption is between the first Monday in January and the first Monday of June each year.

Annually, in March, we mail an inquiry concerning continuing eligibility to taxpayers who received the Homestead exemption in the previous year. If there is no change in the eligibility status, no action is necessary by the taxpayer.

More detail about the Homestead tax exemption may be found on the Hamilton County Auditor's website (hcauditor.org) or taxpayers may visit the Auditor's Office on the 3rd floor of the County Administration Building at 138 E. Court St. in downtown Cincinnati. The phone number is 513-946-4099.