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# Taxpayers make affidavit queries

BY TIM RICHARD  
STAFF WRITER

Great numbers of callers are concerned — even worried — about the affidavit you must fill out to get the lower property tax rate on your principal homestead. Your concern is that you will be taxed 24 mills, the non-homestead rate, instead of the lower rate — six mills if Proposal A passes, 12 mills if it doesn't. You want to make sure your homestead affidavit is received, filled out and returned properly.

**Q. Will every homeowner receive this form? When?**

**A. Yes.** In half the state, including Oakland County, it will be mailed by county government. In many cities, the assessor will send it out. Elsewhere, the state Treasury Department will send it to you. They're coordinating efforts to make sure you get one copy — not zero, not two.

It's due in the mail about Feb. 15 and is due back to your local city or township assessor by March 1.

Don't panic! I've seen a sample. It takes barely a minute to fill

out. For non-agricultural homesteads, it will ask for four bits of information:

1. Property identification number — it's already printed on your mailed form.

(If you use something other than the form mailed by the assessor, you'll need to fill in the "PIN" number. In my city, it's a 12-digit number that appears just above my name on the tax bill.)

2. Your signature and the co-owner's (usually your spouse's).

3. Your social security number and the co-owner's.

4. The street address of the property only if it's different from where you receive your mail.

**Q. If I fail to sign and return this form by March 1, will I be taxed 24 mills on my homestead?**

**A.** The law doesn't provide for a "grace" period yet, but the Legislature is working on bills to extend the filing date because so many older folks will be in Florida.

**Q. My wife and I are leaving for Florida Feb. 12 and won't return until March 17. Where does this leave us?**

**A.** Have someone forward your mail.

If that isn't feasible, visit your city or township assessor and explain the situation. Take along a copy of your property tax bill with the PIN number. This newspaper can't speak for 2,000 local assessors, but we'll bet they let you fill out the form in the office.

When you go to Florida, take along a couple of blank copies for your Michigan "snowbird" friends who haven't heard about this exemption. Watch the local media. The state and this newspaper will advertise the program in Florida and perhaps Arizona.

This writer's parents are full-year Floridians, but their next-door neighbors spend only the cold months there and are domiciled in Livingston County. When I visit, I'll take Janet and Ed an extra copy of the form, as a neighborly favor.

For a nominal service fee, this newspaper is offering a fax and mail service with the state Treasury Department form, just in case the assessor missed you somehow. Watch this column.

**Q. I have two homes in southern Michigan. Would I be able to change the designation of which is my primary residence at a later date?**

**A. Yes.** Fill out a new form at the assessor's office in the city or township where you're claiming primary residence.

**Q. I have two homes — one I live in and one I'm selling on land contract. Can the person buying on land contract get a homestead exemption rate?**

**A. Yes,** says the Treasury Department: "Owning means you hold the legal title to the homestead or that you are buying it on a land contract."

**Q. My husband and I are co-owners. We have separated. He has moved out, but I live in the house. No divorce proceedings have been started. What do I do?**

**A.** Ask your husband to sign the form. If he can't or won't, visit your city assessor and explain the situation.

**Q. Will officials check my homestead affidavit against my voter registration to see if they**

See HOMESTEAD, 6A

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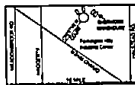
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