

Readers' questions on Proposal A answered here

By TIM RICHARD
STAFF WRITER

This is the final installment of answers to readers' questions about Proposal A on the March 15 ballot.

Q. Is the real estate transfer tax deductible on the income tax?
A. No, says the state treasurer's office.

Currently, the Legislature has reduced the rate to 0.75 percent, or \$750 per \$100,000. Lawmakers are dickering over whether to give the cut immediate effect. Best guess: They'll vote immediate effect after the March 15 election.

Q. On the question of putting your Social Security number on the homestead affidavit (to get the lower property tax rate), your facts are totally erroneous. The federal Privacy Act protects your Social Security number. You should feel pretty bad about misleading the community. Shame on you!

A. Better check Section 42 USC 405 (c)(2)(C)(i), (v) and (vi) — the Social Security Act, which permits state and federal tax collectors to request Social Security numbers.

If you withhold the number from your affidavit, Treasury's computer will reject your form.

Treasury hasn't worked out what will happen next. Lanning will either ask you for other proof (unspecified) or assign its staff to look up your Social Security number, which already is on your state income tax return.

Q. Must I file an affidavit if I don't think I'm eligible for the homestead rate?

A. No. If you sign the affidavit, you're saying you

are eligible. It's for homeowners and only for the domicile, or principal residence.

Q. My husband was transferred here. We're renting temporarily. Our house in western Michigan is for sale but empty. Are we eligible for the homestead rate?

A. You must own and occupy your principal residence to be eligible for the homestead rate.

But there's hope. Lawmakers are working on a system of pro-rating the tax for the months in which you occupied the home. Meanwhile, the governor has ordered the Treasury Department to set up an appeals process.

Q. I'm due in the hospital for surgery March 15, election day. How can I vote?

A. Contact your local (city or township) clerk immediately and ask for an absentee ballot application.

Q. I live in foster care but keep my own home. Am I entitled to the homestead exemption? I get confused answers. The assessor says I should file for it.

A. "Yes, unless the home is occupied by someone other than your spouse or dependents," says Treasury.

Q. My daughter and I are co-owners of each other's homes. I live in Detroit, and she lives in Livonia. We signed each other's homestead affidavits. How can we correct the mistake?

A. Yes, you did make a mistake by signing two affidavits. But you can fix it.

File "amended" returns with just one signature and add an explanatory note. Deliver them to your

local assessors. Ask the assessors to pull out the incorrect form.

You should file in Detroit and your daughter in Livonia because that's where you live.

Q. I'd like to see both proposals in print.

A. There's only one proposal — A on the March 15 ballot. Plan B is the legislative backup plan, which becomes law automatically if Proposal A is defeated.

Proposal A will be summarized in 100 words on IX of the Michigan Constitution and runs a couple thousand words. Moreover, its adoption will affect 26 different statutes running into hundreds of pages.

Plan B consists of the aforementioned statutes. Statutes affecting school finance reform are: PA 312-314, 322-334, 336, 338 and 340.

Statutes affecting education reform are: PA 318, 320-321, 335, 337, 339 and 362.

Our newspapers and the dailies have printed many stories adequately summarizing the plans. Suggestion: Pay no attention to the bombastic TV commercials that began last week and will run through election day.

Q. I'd like to see a list of major supporters on each side.

A. For Proposal A: Gov. John Engler, Michigan Chamber of Commerce, business groups in general,

Michigan Townships Association.

Opposed: Democratic gubernatorial candidates, Michigan Education Association, major labor unions, League of Women Voters, Michigan Municipal League.

The tobacco industry is rumored to be planning to spend megabucks because Proposal A would raise the cigarette tax (currently 25 cents a pack) to 75 cents while the backup plan would raise it to 40 cents. Michigan is a crucial state for the tobacco industry because many neighboring states may raise their tobacco taxes if voters here approve Proposal A.

Many state legislators are keeping their mouths shut and catering to local concerns. As a broad generality, Republicans back A, Democrats oppose it.

May 1 is the deadline to return your affidavit to your local assessor in order to be eligible for the 6-mill or 12-mill homestead property tax rate. You will need to fill in your PIN (property identification number), signature and Social Security number. If you fail to get your blank in the mail, this newspaper will send you one at a \$4.95 service charge. Call toll-free 1-800-967-5904 from anywhere in the U.S. Ask for item 0301. Have your Visa or MasterCard charge card ready.

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