Assessor Berrios Seeks $14 Million for Erroneous Exemptions Taken by Taxpayers

Millions of Dollars Being Distributed to Local Taxing Bodies Today

CHICAGO – Cook County Assessor Joseph Berrios announced today that his office is seeking $14 million for erroneous exemptions taken by taxpayers. This billing was made possible due to a new law that was initiated by Berrios.

“I think the success of the program has already shown us just how much this new law was needed,” Berrios explained. “Previously, we did not have a law in place to help recover the money unfairly taken from erroneous exemptions or to deter this from happening in the future.”

The erroneous exemption law provides for the collection and distribution of unpaid property taxes, penalties and interest. Close to $6.2 million will be returned to the local taxing bodies today as a result of the new law.

“Each year, Cook County taxpayers lose millions of dollars because people cheat or erroneously claim exemptions,” Berrios said. “At a time when schools and local municipalities are severely struggling with budget issues, it will be helpful for this money to go back to serving the community.”

Local taxing bodies located in each of the county’s 38 townships will be receiving some of the pool of money collected due to the erroneous exemptions taken. The total amount of money being distributed in each township varies depending on the amount of erroneous exemptions that were received.

In 2014, approximately $3.4 million was collected due to erroneous exemptions taken within the City of Chicago and approximately $2.8 million was collected for suburban Cook County.

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Cook County Assessor’s Office
Assessor Berrios Seeks $14 Million for Erroneous Exemption Savings - Millions Being Distributed to Local Taxing Bodies Today
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By law, a person is allowed to collect an exemption only on the home that is his or her primary residence. This new law gives the Cook County Assessor the means to recoup funds from those who have improperly received homeowner, senior, disabled persons’ or disabled veterans’ exemptions. The law also allows the assessor to administer property tax liens on the homes of those taxpayers who have received undue property tax exemptions.

Berrios proposed the measure shortly after taking office when his administration noticed a high volume of e-mails and anonymous phone calls reporting that people were improperly receiving exemptions. In the vast majority of those cases, the claims were proven to be true. The legislation was passed unanimously by both the House and Senate.

“I am extremely proud of the work and extensive research that went into the development of this new erroneous exemption law. It is sure to have a dramatic and positive impact not only on the struggling, budget-strapped local taxing bodies but on taxpayers throughout the county,” Berrios said.

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