

(35 ILCS 200/9-275)

Sec. 9-275. Erroneous homestead exemptions.

(a) For purposes of this Section:

"Erroneous homestead exemption" means a homestead exemption that was granted for real property in a taxable year if the property was not eligible for that exemption in that taxable year. If the taxpayer receives an erroneous homestead exemption under a single Section of this Code for the same property in multiple years, that exemption is considered a single erroneous homestead exemption for purposes of this Section. However, if the taxpayer receives erroneous homestead exemptions under multiple Sections of this Code for the same property, or if the taxpayer receives erroneous homestead exemptions under the same Section of this Code for multiple properties, then each of those exemptions is considered a separate erroneous homestead exemption for purposes of this Section.

"Homestead exemption" means an exemption under Section 15-165 (disabled veterans), 15-167 (returning veterans), 15-168 (disabled persons), 15-169 (disabled veterans standard homestead), 15-170 (senior citizens), 15-172 (senior citizens assessment freeze), 15-175 (general homestead), 15-176 (alternative general homestead), or 15-177 (long-time occupant).

"Erroneous exemption principal amount" means the total difference between the property taxes actually billed to a property index number and the amount of property taxes that would have been billed but for the erroneous exemption or exemptions.

"Taxpayer" means the property owner or leasehold owner that erroneously received a homestead exemption upon property.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, in counties with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, the chief county assessment officer shall include the following information with each assessment notice sent in a general assessment year: (1) a list of each homestead exemption available under Article 15 of this Code and a description of the eligibility criteria for that exemption; (2) a list of each homestead exemption applied to the property in the current assessment year; (3) information regarding penalties and interest that may be incurred under this Section if the taxpayer received an erroneous homestead exemption in a previous taxable year; and (4) notice of the 60-day grace period available under this subsection. If, within 60 days after receiving his or her assessment notice, the taxpayer notifies the chief county assessment officer that he or she received an erroneous homestead exemption in a previous taxable year, and if the taxpayer pays the erroneous exemption principal amount, plus interest as provided in subsection (f), then the taxpayer shall not be liable for the penalties provided in subsection (f) with respect to that exemption.

(c) In counties with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants, when the chief county assessment officer determines that one or more erroneous homestead exemptions was applied to the property, the erroneous exemption principal amount, together with all applicable interest and penalties as provided in subsections (f) and (j), shall constitute a lien in the name of the People of Cook County on the property receiving the erroneous homestead exemption. Upon becoming aware of the existence of one or more erroneous homestead exemptions, the chief county assessment officer shall cause to be served, by

both regular mail and certified mail, a notice of discovery as set forth in subsection (c-5). The chief county assessment officer in a county with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants may cause a lien to be recorded against property that (1) is located in the county and (2) received one or more erroneous homestead exemptions if, upon determination of the chief county assessment officer, the taxpayer received: (A) one or 2 erroneous homestead exemptions for real property, including at least one erroneous homestead exemption granted for the property against which the lien is sought, during any of the 3 collection years immediately prior to the current collection year in which the notice of discovery is served; or (B) 3 or more erroneous homestead exemptions for real property, including at least one erroneous homestead exemption granted for the property against which the lien is sought, during any of the 6 collection years immediately prior to the current collection year in which the notice of discovery is served. Prior to recording the lien against the property, the chief county assessment officer shall cause to be served, by both regular mail and certified mail, return receipt requested, on the person to whom the most recent tax bill was mailed and the owner of record, a notice of intent to record a lien against the property. The chief county assessment officer shall cause the notice of intent to record a lien to be served within 3 years from the date on which the notice of discovery was served.

(c-5) The notice of discovery described in subsection (c) shall: (1) identify, by property index number, the property for which the chief county assessment officer has knowledge indicating the existence of an erroneous homestead exemption; (2) set forth the taxpayer's liability for principal, interest, penalties, and administrative costs including, but not limited to, recording fees described in subsection (f); (3) inform the taxpayer that he or she will be served with a notice of intent to record a lien within 3 years from the date of service of the notice of discovery; and (4) inform the taxpayer that he or she may pay the outstanding amount, plus interest, penalties, and administrative costs at any time prior to being served with the notice of intent to record a lien or within 30 days after the notice of intent to record a lien is served.

(d) The notice of intent to record a lien described in subsection (c) shall: (1) identify, by property index number, the property against which the lien is being sought; (2) identify each specific homestead exemption that was erroneously granted and the year or years in which each exemption was granted; (3) set forth the erroneous exemption principal amount due and the interest amount and any penalty and administrative costs due; (4) inform the taxpayer that he or she may request a hearing within 30 days after service and may appeal the hearing officer's ruling to the circuit court; (5) inform the taxpayer that he or she may pay the erroneous exemption principal amount, plus interest and penalties, within 30 days after service; and (6) inform the taxpayer that, if the lien is recorded against the property, the amount of the lien will be adjusted to include the applicable recording fee and that fees for recording a release of the lien shall be incurred by the taxpayer. A lien shall not be filed pursuant to this Section if the taxpayer pays the erroneous exemption principal amount, plus penalties and interest, within 30 days of service of the notice of intent to record a lien.

(e) The notice of intent to record a lien shall also include a form that the taxpayer may return to the chief county assessment officer to request a hearing. The taxpayer may request a hearing by returning the form within 30 days after service. The hearing shall be held within 90 days after the taxpayer is served. The chief county assessment officer shall promulgate

rules of service and procedure for the hearing. The chief county assessment officer must generally follow rules of evidence and practices that prevail in the county circuit courts, but, because of the nature of these proceedings, the chief county assessment officer is not bound by those rules in all particulars. The chief county assessment officer shall appoint a hearing officer to oversee the hearing. The taxpayer shall be allowed to present evidence to the hearing officer at the hearing. After taking into consideration all the relevant testimony and evidence, the hearing officer shall make an administrative decision on whether the taxpayer was erroneously granted a homestead exemption for the taxable year in question. The taxpayer may appeal the hearing officer's ruling to the circuit court of the county where the property is located as a final administrative decision under the Administrative Review Law.

(f) A lien against the property imposed under this Section shall be filed with the county recorder of deeds, but may not be filed sooner than 60 days after the notice of intent to record a lien was delivered to the taxpayer if the taxpayer does not request a hearing, or until the conclusion of the hearing and all appeals if the taxpayer does request a hearing. If a lien is filed pursuant to this Section and the taxpayer received one or 2 erroneous homestead exemptions during any of the 3 collection years immediately prior to the current collection year in which the notice of discovery is served, then the erroneous exemption principal amount, plus 10% interest per annum or portion thereof from the date the erroneous exemption principal amount would have become due if properly included in the tax bill, shall be charged against the property by the chief county assessment officer. However, if a lien is filed pursuant to this Section and the taxpayer received 3 or more erroneous homestead exemptions during any of the 6 collection years immediately prior to the current collection year in which the notice of discovery is served, the erroneous exemption principal amount, plus a penalty of 50% of the total amount of the erroneous exemption principal amount for that property and 10% interest per annum or portion thereof from the date the erroneous exemption principal amount would have become due if properly included in the tax bill, shall be charged against the property by the chief county assessment officer. If a lien is filed pursuant to this Section, the taxpayer shall not be liable for interest that accrues between the date the notice of discovery is served and the date the lien is filed. Before recording the lien with the county recorder of deeds, the chief county assessment officer shall adjust the amount of the lien to add administrative costs, including but not limited to the applicable recording fee, to the total lien amount.

(g) If a person received an erroneous homestead exemption under Section 15-170 and: (1) the person was the spouse, child, grandchild, brother, sister, niece, or nephew of the previous taxpayer; and (2) the person received the property by bequest or inheritance; then the person is not liable for the penalties imposed under this Section for any year or years during which the chief county assessment officer did not require an annual application for the exemption. However, that person is responsible for any interest owed under subsection (f).

(h) If the erroneous homestead exemption was granted as a result of a clerical error or omission on the part of the chief county assessment officer, and if the taxpayer has paid the tax bills as received for the year in which the error occurred, then the interest and penalties authorized by this Section with respect to that homestead exemption shall not be chargeable to the taxpayer. However, nothing in this Section shall prevent the

collection of the erroneous exemption principal amount due and owing.

(i) A lien under this Section is not valid as to (1) any bona fide purchaser for value without notice of the erroneous homestead exemption whose rights in and to the underlying parcel arose after the erroneous homestead exemption was granted but before the filing of the notice of lien; or (2) any mortgagee, judgment creditor, or other lienor whose rights in and to the underlying parcel arose before the filing of the notice of lien. A title insurance policy for the property that is issued by a title company licensed to do business in the State showing that the property is free and clear of any liens imposed under this Section shall be prima facie evidence that the taxpayer is without notice of the erroneous homestead exemption. Nothing in this Section shall be deemed to impair the rights of subsequent creditors and subsequent purchasers under Section 30 of the Conveyances Act.

(j) When a lien is filed against the property pursuant to this Section, the chief county assessment officer shall mail a copy of the lien to the person to whom the most recent tax bill was mailed and to the owner of record, and the outstanding liability created by such a lien is due and payable within 30 days after the mailing of the lien by the chief county assessment officer. This liability is deemed delinquent and shall bear interest beginning on the day after the due date at a rate of 1.5% per month or portion thereof. Payment shall be made to the county treasurer. Upon receipt of the full amount due, as determined by the chief county assessment officer, the county treasurer shall distribute the amount paid as provided in subsection (k). Upon presentment by the taxpayer to the chief county assessment officer of proof of payment of the total liability, the chief county assessment officer shall provide in reasonable form a release of the lien. The release of the lien provided shall clearly inform the taxpayer that it is the responsibility of the taxpayer to record the lien release form with the county recorder of deeds and to pay any applicable recording fees.

(k) The county treasurer shall pay collected erroneous exemption principal amounts, pro rata, to the taxing districts, or their legal successors, that levied upon the subject property in the taxable year or years for which the erroneous homestead exemptions were granted, except as set forth in this Section. The county treasurer shall deposit collected penalties and interest into a special fund established by the county treasurer to offset the costs of administration of the provisions of this Section by the chief county assessment officer's office, as appropriated by the county board. If the costs of administration of this Section exceed the amount of interest and penalties collected in the special fund, the chief county assessor shall be reimbursed by each taxing district or their legal successors for those costs. Such costs shall be paid out of the funds collected by the county treasurer on behalf of each taxing district pursuant to this Section.

(l) The chief county assessment officer in a county with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants shall establish an amnesty period for all taxpayers owing any tax due to an erroneous homestead exemption granted in a tax year prior to the 2013 tax year. The amnesty period shall begin on the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 98th General Assembly and shall run through December 31, 2013. If, during the amnesty period, the taxpayer pays the entire arrearage of taxes due for tax years prior to 2013, the county clerk shall abate and not seek to collect any interest or penalties that may be applicable and shall not seek civil or criminal prosecution for any taxpayer for tax years prior to 2013. Failure to pay all such taxes due during the

amnesty period established under this Section shall invalidate the amnesty period for that taxpayer.

The chief county assessment officer in a county with 3,000,000 or more inhabitants shall (i) mail notice of the amnesty period with the tax bills for the second installment of taxes for the 2012 assessment year and (ii) as soon as possible after the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 98th General Assembly, publish notice of the amnesty period in a newspaper of general circulation in the county. Notices shall include information on the amnesty period, its purpose, and the method by which to make payment.

Taxpayers who are a party to any criminal investigation or to any civil or criminal litigation that is pending in any circuit court or appellate court, or in the Supreme Court of this State, for nonpayment, delinquency, or fraud in relation to any property tax imposed by any taxing district located in the State on the effective date of this amendatory Act of the 98th General Assembly may not take advantage of the amnesty period.

A taxpayer who has claimed 3 or more homestead exemptions in error shall not be eligible for the amnesty period established under this subsection. (Source: P.A. 98-93, eff. 7-16-13; 98-756, eff. 7-16-14; 98-811, eff. 1-1-15; 98-1143, eff. 1-1-15.)