

Ohio Senate votes for property tax relief for older adults, not all residents

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Instead of easing property tax bills for all Ohioans, changes in the state Senate would target helping lower-income older adults.

Many Ohioans face high property tax bills after new valuations. In October, the Ohio House of Representatives passed House Bill 187, which would have allowed tax commissioners to look at three years of home sales data, reducing some tax burdens dramatically. Butler County, for example, would have dropped from an average of 42% to 25%. It was billed as a temporary fix for 2023, 2024 and 2025.

But on Wednesday, senators replaced that language with a larger tax break for low-income individuals who are 65 years and older and residents who are disabled. The benefit would last for three years. The Ohio Senate passed the bill unanimously.

The new version of the bill would allow those individuals who earn \$36,000 or less to exempt, or not pay, property taxes on the first \$30,000 of their home's value. Individuals who make up to \$75,000 could exempt some of their home's value based on their income.

These changes are an increase from the current \$25,000 exemption offered for those who earn less than \$30,000.

Sen. Kristina Roegner, R-Hudson, expressed concern that the changes help some Ohio homeowners, but not all of them. "I think the better solution would be a reprieve for everybody that's paying property taxes," she said.

However, Sen. Tim Schaffer, R-Lancaster, said the new version is an important step that will keep Ohioans from losing their houses. "This is really kind of a first aid application to a bleed-out problem that we have in society right now."

And Sen. Bill Blessing, R-Colerain Township, said the initial proposal would have created a problem in three years when the property tax relief ran out. In the meantime, the House's plan would push up home values and taxes, he said. "This gambit can only work if home prices fall, but that's unlikely to happen."

Blessing said it's important to tackle the underlying problems that lead to higher home values and taxes, including a lack of new homes being built, corporate investors purchasing homes and turning them into rentals and a proliferation of property tax exemptions.

Democrats wanted to offset the tax impact on school districts because of this exemption, but that idea was rejected.

The House will have to sign off on the Senate's changes for these changes before sending the bill to Gov. Mike DeWine.

Reporter Haley BeMiller contributed to this article.