



Maria Pappas
Cook County Treasurer

SENIOR CITIZENS REAL ESTATE TAX DEFERRAL PROGRAM
TAX YEAR 2019 (Payable in 2020)

Dear Senior Citizen:

On August 22, 2011, the State of Illinois **amended** the Senior Citizens Real Estate Deferral Act. The Act has been in effect since Tax Year 2014 (payable in 2015). The amendments to the Act are as follows:

1. Senior citizens **can defer up to \$5,000** of the property tax amount and special assessments on their personal residence ("homestead").
2. Senior citizens' qualifying total household income **maximum is \$55,000**.

We have enclosed information from the Illinois Department of Revenue regarding such amendments. We have also included the following forms:

- IL-1017—*Application for Deferral of Real Estate/Special Assessment Taxes for Tax Year 2019*
- IL-1018—*Real Estate/Special Assessment Tax Deferral and Recovery Agreement for Tax Year 2019*

You must complete **both forms** in order to participate in the Senior Citizen Real Estate Tax Deferral Program.

Form IL-1017 and this letter's attachment present a list of supporting documentation that you must provide to determine your eligibility.

Once you complete the required fields on Form IL-1017 and Form IL-1018, please send these **ORIGINAL** forms (signed and notarized where applicable) along with **PHOTOCOPIES** (not the originals) of supporting documentation to the following address:

Cook County Treasurer
Attn: Senior Deferral Department
118 North Clark Street – Room 112
Chicago, IL 60602

Both of the referenced **ORIGINAL** forms (IL-1017 and IL-1018) and **PHOTOCOPIES** of supporting documents must be postmarked on or before **March 1, 2020**, for you to be eligible for the Program. Under Illinois Law, **there are NO time extensions**.

If you have any questions, you may visit our website at www.cookcountytreasurer.com, and go to the "Services for Seniors" tab and select "Senior Citizen Tax Deferral Program"; or you may contact our office at (312) 443-5100.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Pappas".

Maria Pappas
Cook County Treasurer

TAX YEAR 2019 SENIOR CITIZENS REAL ESTATE TAX DEFERRAL PROGRAM

The **SENIOR CITIZENS REAL ESTATE TAX DEFERRAL PROGRAM**, in effect, is a form of "loan." The loan must be repaid only if one of these two events happens:

1. The taxpayer dies (except in the case of certain surviving spouses); or
2. The qualifying property is sold or refinanced.

In the event of death, the heirs need not repay the deferred taxes until one full year after the taxpayer's death. (See, *Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure*). The amount of deferred taxes is repayable at a rate of 6% **simple** (not compound) interest. (See, *Form IL-1017 – General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure*).

The filing deadline is **MARCH 1, 2020**. No extensions of time are permitted. You are strongly encouraged to submit your paperwork as soon as you can in the event that there is a problem with your application and we need to contact you for missing paperwork.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE? (Form IL-1017 General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

- A. **Age:** Be **65** years of age or older by **June 1, 2020**.
- B. **Total household income:** Not more than **\$55,000**.
- C. **Own the property:** Ownership is limited to: (a) the senior citizen alone or (b) the senior citizen jointly with his/her spouse - **not** held jointly with a child or any other person. For property held in "Trust," please refer below, as well as to Form IL-1017 and the Illinois Department of Revenue's brochure.
- D. **Occupied the property:** Senior citizen has lived in the property or other qualifying property for at least three (3) years.
- E. **Property taxes and special assessments:** Provide a copy of your most recent property tax bill. In addition, you must have **no** unpaid property taxes and special assessments (including penalties) for all prior years' taxes.
- F. **Insurance declaration: Residence owners** – the page stating the amount(s) of coverage on your home and period of coverage. **Condominium owners** – must also submit this information covering the entire building (contact your condominium association).
- G. **Signature(s):** To participate in the program, you must have a signed written approval from your spouse (if filing jointly) or trustee (if the property is held in "trust.")

For new participants, you must also provide **PHOTOCOPIES**, not originals, of the following:

- **Birth Date Verification:** Front and back photocopy of your state driver's license or ID, birth certificate, or U.S. passport.
- **Home Owner Verification:** Deed, Title Policy, or Torrens Certificate. For property held in trust, the "Deed in Trust" and the "Trust Agreement," as well as signatures from both the owner and trustee (usually a bank or trust company) on Form IL-1017. As to Form IL-1018, the trustee only signs.

WHAT IS A HOMESTEAD? (Form IL-1017 General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

Land and buildings on such land is owned and occupied as your principal residence for at least the last **three (3) years**. This includes single-family houses, condominiums, or units in a multi-dwelling building owned and operated as a cooperative. You are **not** disqualified if you have temporarily resided in a licensed facility (for not more than one year) as defined in Section 1-113 of the Nursing Home Care Act, during the subject three (3) years. See, 210 ILCS 45/1-101 *et seq.*

WHAT IS QUALIFYING PROPERTY? (Form IL-1017 General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

1. The property **may not** generate any income (such as rent).
2. The property is not subject to a lien for unpaid property taxes and special assessments.

HOW MUCH TAX CAN BE DEFERRED? (Form IL-1017 General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

You decide this. Pursuant to the State of Illinois's recent amendment to section 3 of the Senior Citizens Real Estate Deferral Act, the maximum property tax amount that can be deferred is \$5,000.00. See, 320 ILCS 30/3 et seq. The taxpayer will be responsible for paying the County any tax amount due over the \$5,000.00 limitation. Id.

WHAT IF I HAVE A MORTGAGE ON MY HOUSE?

This does not disqualify you. Generally, you do not have to get your lender's approval or consent to participate in the Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program. However, if you have a reverse mortgage, the lender may require that all other liens be subordinate to that mortgage. This program may jeopardize your reverse mortgage. Therefore, check with your lender with respect to participating in this program.

MUST I APPLY EVERY YEAR? (Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

YES. You are not automatically renewed into the Program. You must submit a separate Application (Form IL-1017) and Agreement (Form IL-1018) each year. These forms will be provided to you by the County Treasurer each January. Once you are approved for the program, you will not have to provide all of the supporting documents each year. **However, you must provide proof of insurance each year that you apply.**

MUST I STAY IN THE PROGRAM PERMANENTLY?

NO. You may go "in and out" of the Program as you wish. You are not obligated to stay in it. For example, you can apply for year 1, skip years 2 and 3, and reapply for year 4. If you "opt out" at any time, you can "opt back in" the following year. If you "opt out," you are **not** required to repay taxes already deferred. Remember that deferred taxes must be repaid only in the event of death or sale of the property.

WHAT HAPPENS IF MY SPOUSE DIES? (Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

You may continue in the Program on your own if you qualify. The 1-year repayment rule does not apply to surviving spouses as long as the surviving spouse is at least **55** years of age within 6 months of their spouse's death. If you are applying as a surviving spouse, we need your **spouse's Death Certificate and a document verifying your birthdate.** Submit **PHOTOCOPIES**, not originals.

TRUST: (Form IL-1017 General Information and Illinois Department of Revenue Brochure)

For property held in trust, special rules apply to first time participants and thereafter. The trust must be an Illinois Land Trust with the deferral applicant(s) being the sole beneficiary(s) of the trust.

- **Single Deferral Applicant:** Must be the sole beneficiary of the trust in order for the trust to be considered a qualifying trust.
- **Married Deferral Applicant:** Must be the sole beneficiary of the trust in order for the trust to be considered a qualifying trust, although one spouse may be named as the first-tier beneficiary and the other spouse may be named as the second-tier beneficiary under the trust agreement

The application must be filled out by the beneficiary of the trust who meets all eligibility requirements and obtains the approval from the trustee to enter into the Senior Deferral Program.

WHOM DO I CALL FOR MORE INFORMATION?

If you need forms or more information, please contact us by:

- Writing Cook County Treasurer's Office, Attn: Senior Deferral Department, 118 N. Clark St., Room 112, Chicago, IL 60602;
- Calling 312.443.5100;
- Visiting our website, www.cookcountytreasurer.com, and going to the "Services for Seniors" tab

If you do not understand this information, contact an attorney. Employees of the Office of the Cook County Treasurer are not authorized or permitted to give legal advice with regard to this program.