Written by Pat McKinley
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According to PAR (Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana) forty-eight parishes in the State of Louisiana, (Bossier Parish) included, had approved a 2010 Constitutional Amendment allowing spouses of deceased veterans with a hundred percent service-connected disability rating, to claim an additional seventy-five-thousand dollars in property tax exemptions thereby, increasing the original seventy-five-thousand to one-hundred-fifty-thousand dollars.

Kudos to Bossier Parish residents for approving the 2010 Constitutional Amendment, however, the 2010 amendment made no provisions should a veteran pass away prior to that amendment going into effect, virtually leaving the surviving spouse out to dry when trying to claim the extra exemption.

This, according to PAR, prompted the most recent proposed amendment, in which they say will allow our lawmakers to, “Tweak” the language so-to-speak, thereby allowing the surviving spouses to claim the higher exemption, regardless of when the veteran passed away.

On November 6 it will read:  “Do you support an amendment to exempt from ad valorem taxation, in addition to the homestead exemption, the next seventy-five-thousand dollars of value of property owned and occupied by the spouse of a deceased veteran with a service-connected disability rating of one-hundred percent who passed away prior to the enactment of the exemption?”

There are four parishes, which are currently set to vote on the proposed amendment this November 6: Catahoula, East Carroll, Madison Parish and West Feliciana Parish. The original forty-eight parishes do not have to revote for it will apply to the past adoption and the new amendment will go into effect on January 1, 2013.

While there are still twelve parishes that, have yet, put this to their voters: Allen, Claiborne, Evangeline, Jackson, Lincoln, Orleans, Red River, Sabine, Tensas, Vernon, West Carroll, and Winn. We can only hope the voters of these twelve remaining parishes will soon be given the opportunity to cast their vote in the very near future.

If passed, you may wonder if this amendment will increase the millage for other taxpayers. The answer is no, there have been protected measures put in place that will prohibit a “roll-up” of millage adjustments.

Even though, the value of taxable property may fall when homestead exemptions rise, the taxing authority has so valiantly, agreed to absorb the tax loss, an estimated two-million in lost revenue, which is less than one-tenth of one percent of total property tax collected statewide (PAR) reports.

Some might say, this is our way of giving back to the men and women who have given up their life, family, limbs and time, so that we may sleep peacefully at night and travel freely from one state to another without having to have a passport, and that we may exercise our rights under our federal and state constitution.

In my humble opinion, it is the least we can do.

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