

**PRESS RELEASE REGARDING CHANGES TO HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION LAW**

**FROM:**

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Residents of St. Bernard Parish are advised of a recent change enacted by the Louisiana Legislature in the area of homestead exemption law. Currently, residents of Louisiana can apply for property tax exemptions on the single property they own and occupy up to the first \$75,000 in property value, paying taxes on property value exceeding that amount.

When a property is no longer owner-occupied, current law mandates that the owner contact the parish assessor to advise the assessor if the property no longer qualifies for homestead exemption. Failure to do so places the property owner at risk of being found guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by fines up to \$500 and/or imprisonment of up to six months.

Effective August 1, 2016, a new law (Act. 437 of the 2016 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature) goes into effect after being passed by the full Legislature and signed by Governor Edwards. This new statute (La. Revised Statute 14:71.4) creates the crime of homestead exemption fraud by which any person intentionally claiming *more than one* homestead exemption may be liable for the same fines and prison term as listed above *with the additional penalty* of paying back to the state or local government all of the tax dollars lost by the state or local government due to the multiple homestead exemptions claimed.

If any St. Bernard Parish resident feels they may have more than one homestead exemption claimed, or if they are unsure if a prior homestead exemption was effectively removed, they are always welcome to contact the office of the Assessor at (504) 279-6379, or to visit the office, 2118 Jackson Blvd., Suite A, in Chalmette. "Any such proactive inquiry from a taxpayer helps support the premise that the resident did not intend to claim multiple homestead exemptions," said Assessor Jaylynn Bergeron Turner. "Our office's open-door policy and willingness to assist our residents helps ensure our taxpayers are in compliance with new laws such as this one affecting Louisiana homesteads."

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