

Political Update
October 2007

The Illinois House approved legislation that provides financial relief to Cook County homeowners through a tax cap extension and a variety of exemptions, while providing additional savings for veterans and the disabled.

The tax cap was originally approved in 2004, however, it was temporary and recently expired. Without the extension, Cook County homeowners faced anywhere from an 11-percent to a 24-percent increase in their property taxes.

House Bill 664 extends the 7-percent assessment cap on residential property for three more years and provides a number of exemptions for seniors, long-time homeowners, the disabled and spouses of fallen emergency workers.

House Bill 664 also:

- Provides an additional exemption to the assessment cap for only the 2006 tax year if the assessed value of the residential homeowner's property increased by 100 percent or more during the last two assessment cycles.
- Increases the General Homestead Exemption by \$500.
- Creates a long-term exemption for those who have owned their home for more than 10 years and have a household income of less than \$100,000.
- Offers relief to senior citizens with an increase of \$1,000 for the Circuit Breaker Income liability and a \$500 increase of the Senior Homestead Exemption.
- Grants full assessment freeze benefits through the Senior Citizen Assessment Freeze Homestead Exemption. The freeze will increase by \$10,000 for the next two years.
- Creates new tax exemptions for the disabled; returning and disabled veterans; and creates tax relief for spouses of fallen police officers, firefighters and EMTs.

Italian-American State Representatives include: Rep. Franco Coladipietro, Rep. John D'Amico, Rep. Frank Mautino, Rep. Robert Molaro, Rep. Rosemary Mulligan, Rep. Dennis Reboletti, Rep. Robert Rita, and Rep. Angelo Saviano.

The governor signed into law legislation to reform teen driving laws in Illinois sponsored by Rep. John D'Amico, who says the law bill will result in teen drivers who are better prepared to get behind the wheel and be safe from the first day they get their license.

Senate Bill 172, which overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate earlier this year, makes numerous changes to the law regulating driver's licenses for teenagers. Changes include: that drivers under the age of 18 will no longer be permitted to drive between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, and between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. Sunday through Thursday. Currently, only drivers under 17 have a curfew. Exemptions remain for extra curricular activities, emergencies and performing chores at the direction of parents. The measure also extends from six to 12 months the provision that prohibits new drivers from driving with more than one passenger under the age of 10. An exemption exists for siblings and children of the driver.

State Representative Dennis Reboletti sponsored legislation that would inform local libraries of sex offenders living in their jurisdiction.

SB 364 mandates that police departments would disclose to local libraries in their jurisdiction the name, address, date of birth, place of employment, school attended and

offense or adjudication of all sex and violent offenders. Currently, only schools, child care facilities and institutions of higher education are given this information.

SB 364 received bi-partisan support and overwhelmingly passed both Houses. It is currently awaiting the Governor's signature.

Local law enforcement will now have an additional tool in their arsenal for solving "cold cases" under legislation co-sponsored by Reboletti.

Senate Bill 710 would mandate that any convicted sex offender who is currently incarcerated at an Illinois Department of Corrections facility would have to submit a blood, saliva, or tissue specimen.

Current law states that individuals convicted of certain offenses are required to submit DNA samples to the Illinois State Police. However, there is a certain population of individuals who were sent to an Illinois Department of Corrections facility prior to the requirement that DNA be submitted.

Reboletti stated that this legislation would also mandate that any individual who is convicted of a sex offense or any offense that is considered sexually motivated would be required to submit a DNA sample within 45 days of his or her placement in a Department of Corrections facility. SB 710 has passed the House and is awaiting a vote in the Senate.

This column is written by Nina Albano Vidmer, executive director of the Italian American Political Coalition. To submit information, please fax to 708-401-0360 by the first of each month for consideration in the following month's issue.