

HB 338 - Sr./Disabled Vet/Widow-Widower Property Tax Exemption

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To: Rep. Cathy Tilton <Rep.Cathy.Tilton@akleg.gov>; Sen. Bill Stoltze <Sen.Bill.Stoltze@akleg.gov>;

Cc: Rep. Shelley Hughes <hughes@alaskansforhughes.com>; Rep. Mark Neuman <Rep.Mark.Neuman@akleg.gov>; Rep. Wes Keller <Rep.Wes.Keller@akleg.gov>; Rep. Lynn Gattis <Rep.Lynn.Gattis@akleg.gov>; Mike Dunleavy <sen.michael.dunleavy@akleg.gov>; sen.mike.dunleavy@bethsvalleyviews.com <sen.mike.dunleavy@bethsvalleyviews.com>; Sen. Mike Dunleavy <Sen.Mike.Dunleavy@akleg.gov>;

Good Evening Rep. Tilton and Sen. Stoltze,

First a little good news. A group to which I belong received an update from the Mayors of Palmer and Wasilla regarding the impact of the reductions and eliminations in municipal revenue sharing. The general message was that these cities have prepared for and will weather this storm without going under. They have a positive outlook for the future, and are grateful that their communities charge sales taxes without a battle from their citizenry.

On another note, a friend of mine was at the Mat-Su Borough Assembly meeting tonight and texted me asking me how to find HB 338. I was dismayed and saddened when I read the content of this bill. I cannot believe that you are going to do this to our senior citizens and disabled veterans.

I am sure that you understand that many of our senior citizens are on very limited fixed incomes and are living rent-free in their homes. I cannot believe that you do not understand that those fixed incomes must cover hundreds of dollars in medications (which medicare subsidies you are probably having to reduce) every month, energy costs that are higher than national averages, higher than national average food costs and fortunately live in Alaska where there is no income tax and a Permanent Fund Dividend that assists them in living day-to-day.

The Senior/Disabled property tax exemption may not seem like a lot to you, but it can be the difference between living a full life and homelessness. These exemptions were put in place because a preponderance of Property Tax Foreclosures were occurring among these very vulnerable populations. They are the portions of our populations who founded this state, raised you and fought for freedom around the world. Perhaps it was poor planning, perhaps it was poor judgement, but perhaps it was just unhappy chance that they ended up needing assistance in maintaining their independence from debt.

If you truly, and personally, want to increase the chances of our veterans and senior citizens joining the homeless on the streets of our villages, communities, cities and municipalities, go ahead and pass this bill. Otherwise, hold it in committee and remember your parents and grandparents, your children who served in the military and your friends and neighbors who are only continuing to survive (if not thrive) because they live in the homes that you are helping to keep them in through this exemption.

Please also remember that seniors who are unwilling moved out of their homes generally do not survive much longer after changing their living situations. My father died only 6 months after losing his home. Up until that time, although he was not thriving, he was content. He refused to come to Alaska because it was too far from his home. I will not go into his circumstances, but it was not kind, nor was there anything any of his family could do to help him survive that final battle.

Shame on you Representative Seaton.

Sincerely,

bethf ;-)

Beth Fread

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