

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

# SENATE BILL NO. 648

## 91ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY SENATORS GOODE AND SCHNEIDER.

Pre-filed December 1, 2001, and 1,000 copies ordered printed.

TERRY L. SPIELER, Secretary.

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### AN ACT

To repeal section 137.073, RSMo, relating to assessment and levy of property taxes, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to the same subject.

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*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Missouri, as follows:*

Section A. Section 137.073, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 137.073, to read as follows:

137.073. 1. As used in this section, the following terms mean:

(1) "General reassessment", changes in value, entered in the assessor's books, of a substantial portion of the parcels of real property within a county resulting wholly or partly from reappraisal of value or other actions of the assessor or county equalization body or ordered by the state tax commission or any court;

(2) "Tax rate", "rate", or "rate of levy", singular or plural, includes the tax rate for each purpose of taxation of property a taxing authority is authorized to levy without a vote and any tax rate authorized by election, including bond interest and sinking fund;

(3) "Tax rate ceiling", a tax rate as revised by the taxing authority to comply with the provisions of this section or when a court has determined the tax rate; except that, other provisions of law to the contrary notwithstanding, a school district may levy the operating levy for school purposes required for the current year pursuant to subsection 2 of section 163.021, RSMo, less all adjustments required pursuant to article X, section 22 of the Missouri Constitution, if such tax rate does not exceed the highest tax rate in effect subsequent to the 1980 tax year. This is the maximum tax rate that may be levied, unless a higher tax rate ceiling is approved by voters of the political subdivision as provided in this section;

(4) "Tax revenue", when referring to the previous year, means the actual receipts from ad valorem levies on all classes of property, including state-assessed property, in the immediately

preceding fiscal year of the political subdivision, plus an allowance for taxes billed but not collected in the fiscal year and plus an additional allowance for the revenue which would have been collected from property which was annexed by such political subdivision but which was not previously used in determining tax revenue pursuant to this section. The term "tax revenue" shall not include any receipts from ad valorem levies on any property of a railroad corporation or a public utility, as these terms are defined in section 386.020, RSMo, which were assessed by the assessor of a county or city in the previous year but are assessed by the state tax commission in the current year. All school districts and those counties levying sales taxes pursuant to chapter 67, RSMo, shall include in the calculation of tax revenue an amount equivalent to that by which they reduced property tax levies as a result of sales tax pursuant to section 67.505, RSMo, and section 164.013, RSMo, in the immediately preceding fiscal year but not including any amount calculated to adjust for prior years. For purposes of political subdivisions which were authorized to levy a tax in the prior year but which did not levy such tax or levied a reduced rate, the term "tax revenue", as used in relation to the revision of tax levies mandated by law, shall mean the revenues equal to the amount that would have been available if the voluntary rate reduction had not been made.

2. **(1)** Whenever changes in assessed valuation are entered in the assessor's books, the county clerk in all counties and the assessor of St. Louis City shall notify each political subdivision wholly or partially within the county or St. Louis City of the change in valuation, exclusive of new construction and improvements. All political subdivisions shall immediately revise the rates of levy for each purpose for which taxes are levied to the extent necessary to produce from all taxable property, exclusive of new construction and improvements, substantially the same amount of tax revenue as was produced in the previous year, except that the rate may not exceed the greater of the rate in effect in the 1984 tax year or the most recent voter-approved rate. As provided in section 22 of article X of the constitution, a political subdivision may also revise each levy to allow for inflationary assessment growth occurring within the political subdivision. The inflationary growth factor shall be limited to the actual assessment growth within the political subdivision, exclusive of new construction and improvements, but not to exceed the consumer price index or five percent, whichever is lower.

**(2) Any county or any city not within a county may choose not to allow its property levy rates to be revised to allow for the inflationary growth factor pursuant to the provisions of subdivision (1) of this subsection. A county or a city not within a county may opt out of such inflationary adjustments in any of the following manners:**

**(a) The governing body of the county or the city not within a county may, by majority vote, enact an ordinance that prohibits the revision of its property levy rates to allow for the inflationary growth factor; or**

**(b) The governing body of the county or the city not within a county may, by majority vote, submit to the voters at any municipal, primary or general election a referendum to prohibit the revision of its property levy rates to allow for the inflationary growth factor; or**

**(c) A referendum to prohibit the revision of the property levy rates of the county or the city not within a county, to allow for the inflationary growth factor may be submitted to the voters at any municipal, primary or general election based upon a petition containing the signatures of at least ten percent of the qualified voters voting in the last gubernatorial election who reside in the county or the city not within a county.**

**(3) In the event a referendum is to be submitted to the voters pursuant to subdivision (2) of this subsection, the ballot of submission shall contain, but need not be limited to, the following language:**

**Shall the ..... (governing body) of ..... (county or city not within a county) be prohibited from adjusting the rate or rates of levy to increase the amount of property tax revenue to allow for inflationary growth that may occur between periods of assessment?**

**G Yes**

**G No**

**If a majority of the votes cast on the proposal by the qualified voters voting thereon are in favor of the proposal, then it shall be in effect and a referendum to repeal the enacted ordinance shall not be submitted to voters for at least two years. If a majority of the votes cast by the qualified voters voting are opposed to the proposal, then the governing body shall not be prohibited from revising its levy rates to allow for the inflationary growth factor pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection and the issue may not be resubmitted to voters for at least two years. In accordance with the time limitations set forth in this subdivision, a referendum to repeal an ordinance enacted pursuant to this subdivision may be submitted to the voters upon majority vote of the governing body of the county or the city not within a county, or upon a petition containing the signatures of at least ten percent of the qualified voters voting in the last gubernatorial election who reside in the county or the city not within a county.**

3. (1) Where the taxing authority is a school district, it shall be required to revise the rates of levy to the extent necessary to produce from all taxable property, including state-assessed railroad and utility property, which shall be separately estimated in addition to other data required in complying with section 164.011, RSMo, substantially the amount of tax revenue permitted in this section. In the year following tax rate reduction, the tax rate ceiling may be adjusted to offset such district's reduction in the apportionment of state school moneys due to its

reduced tax rate. However, in the event any school district, in calculating a tax rate ceiling pursuant to this section, requiring the estimating of effects of state-assessed railroad and utility valuation or loss of state aid, discovers that the estimates used result in receipt of excess revenues, which would have required a lower rate if the actual information had been known, the school district shall reduce the tax rate ceiling in the following year to compensate for the excess receipts, and the recalculated rate shall become the tax rate ceiling for purposes of this section.

(2) For any political subdivision which experiences a reduction in the amount of assessed valuation relating to a prior year, due to decisions of the state tax commission or a court pursuant to sections 138.430 to 138.433, RSMo, or due to clerical errors or corrections in the calculation or recordation of any assessed valuation:

(a) Such political subdivision may revise the tax rate ceiling for each purpose it levies taxes to compensate for the reduction in assessed value occurring after the political subdivision calculated the tax rate ceiling in the prior year. Such revision by the political subdivision shall be made at the time of the next calculation of the tax rate after the reduction in assessed valuation has been determined and shall be calculated in a manner that results in the revised tax rate ceiling being the same as it would have been had the corrected or finalized assessment been available at the time of the prior calculation;

(b) In addition, for up to three years following the determination of the reduction in assessed valuation as a result of circumstances defined in this subdivision, such political subdivision may levy a tax rate for each purpose it levies taxes above the revised tax rate ceiling provided in paragraph (a) of this subdivision to recoup any revenues it was entitled to receive for the three-year period preceding such determination.

4. (1) In order to implement the provisions of this section and section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri, the term "improvements" shall apply to both real and personal property. In order to determine the value of new construction and improvements, each county assessor shall maintain a record of real property valuations in such a manner as to identify each year the increase in valuation for each political subdivision in the county as a result of new construction and improvements. The value of new construction and improvements shall include the additional assessed value of all improvements or additions to real property which were begun after and were not part of the prior year's assessment, except that the additional assessed value of all improvements or additions to real property which had been totally or partially exempt from ad valorem taxes pursuant to sections 99.800 to 99.865, RSMo, sections 135.200 to 135.255, RSMo, and section 353.110, RSMo, shall be included in the value of new construction and improvements when the property becomes totally or partially subject to assessment and payment of all ad valorem taxes. The aggregate increase in valuation of personal property for the current year over that of the previous year is the equivalent of the new construction and improvements

factor for personal property. The assessor shall certify the amount of new construction and improvements for each political subdivision to the county clerk in order that political subdivisions shall have this information for the purpose of calculating tax rates pursuant to this section and section 22, article X, Constitution of Missouri. In addition, the state tax commission shall certify each year to each county clerk the increase in the general price level as measured by the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for the United States, or its successor publications, as defined and officially reported by the United States Department of Labor, or its successor agency. The state tax commission shall certify the increase in such index on the latest twelve-month basis available on June first of each year over the immediately preceding prior twelve-month period in order that political subdivisions shall have this information available in setting their tax rates according to law and section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri. For purposes of implementing the provisions of this section and section 22 of article X of the Missouri Constitution, the term "property" means all taxable property, including state assessed property.

(2) Each political subdivision required to revise rates of levy pursuant to this section or section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri shall calculate each tax rate it is authorized to levy and, in establishing each tax rate, shall consider each provision for tax rate revision provided in this section and section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri, separately and without regard to annual tax rate reductions provided in section 67.505, RSMo, and section 164.013, RSMo. Each political subdivision shall set each tax rate it is authorized to levy using the calculation that produces the lowest tax rate ceiling. It is further the intent of the general assembly, pursuant to the authority of section 10(c) of article X of the Constitution of Missouri, that the provisions of such section be applicable to tax rate revisions mandated pursuant to section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri as to reestablishing tax rates as revised in subsequent years, enforcement provisions, and other provisions not in conflict with section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri. Annual tax rate reductions provided in section 67.505, RSMo, and section 164.013, RSMo, shall be applied to the tax rate as established pursuant to this section and section 22 of article X of the Constitution of Missouri, unless otherwise provided by law.

5. (1) In all political subdivisions, the tax rate ceiling established pursuant to this section shall not be increased unless approved by a vote of the people. Approval of the higher tax rate shall be by at least a majority of votes cast. When a proposed higher tax rate requires approval by more than a simple majority pursuant to any provision of law or the constitution, the tax rate increase must receive approval by at least the majority required.

(2) When voters approve an increase in the tax rate, the amount of the increase shall be added to the tax rate ceiling as calculated pursuant to this section to the extent the total rate does not exceed any maximum rate prescribed by law. If a ballot question presents a stated tax rate for approval rather than describing the amount of increase in the question, the stated tax

rate approved shall be the current tax rate ceiling. The increased tax rate ceiling as approved may be applied to the total assessed valuation of the political subdivision at the setting of the next tax rate.

(3) The governing body of any political subdivision may levy a tax rate lower than its tax rate ceiling and may increase that lowered tax rate to a level not exceeding the tax rate ceiling without voter approval.

6. Each taxing authority proposing to levy a tax rate in any year shall notify the clerk of the county commission in the county or counties where the tax rate applies of its tax rate ceiling and its proposed tax rate. Each taxing authority shall express its proposed tax rate in a fraction equal to the nearest one/one hundredth of a cent. A taxing authority shall round up a fraction greater than or equal to five/one thousandth of one cent to the next higher one/one hundredth of a cent. Any taxing authority levying a property tax rate shall provide data, in such form as shall be prescribed by the state auditor by rule, substantiating such tax rate complies with Missouri law. In addition, each taxing authority proposing to levy a tax rate for debt service shall provide data, in such form as shall be prescribed by the state auditor by rule, substantiating the tax rate for debt service complies with Missouri law. A tax rate proposed for annual debt service requirements will be prima facie valid if, after making the payment for which the tax was levied, bonds remain outstanding and the debt fund reserves do not exceed the following year's payments. The county clerk shall keep on file and available for public inspection all such information for a period of three years. The clerk shall, within three days of receipt, forward a copy of the notice of a taxing authority's tax rate ceiling and proposed tax rate and any substantiating data to the state auditor. The state auditor shall, within fifteen days of the date of receipt, examine such information and return to the county clerk his or her findings as to compliance of the tax rate ceiling with this section and as to compliance of any proposed tax rate for debt service with Missouri law. If the state auditor believes that a taxing authority's proposed tax rate does not comply with Missouri law, then the state auditor's findings shall include a recalculated tax rate, and the state auditor may request a taxing authority to submit documentation supporting such taxing authority's proposed tax rate. The county clerk shall immediately forward a copy of the auditor's findings to the taxing authority and shall file a copy of the findings with the information received from the taxing authority. The taxing authority shall have fifteen days from the date of receipt from the county clerk of the state auditor's findings and any request for supporting documentation to accept or reject in writing the rate change certified by the state auditor and to submit all requested information to the state auditor. A copy of the taxing authority's acceptance or rejection and any information submitted to the state auditor shall also be mailed to the county clerk. If a taxing authority rejects a rate change certified by the state auditor and the state auditor does not receive supporting information which justifies the taxing authority's original or any subsequent proposed tax rate, then the state

auditor shall refer the perceived violations of such taxing authority to the attorney general's office and the attorney general is authorized to obtain injunctive relief to prevent the taxing authority from levying a violative tax rate.

7. No tax rate shall be extended on the tax rolls by the county clerk unless the political subdivision has complied with the foregoing provisions of this section.

8. Whenever a taxpayer has cause to believe that a taxing authority has not complied with the provisions of this section, the taxpayer may make a formal complaint with the prosecuting attorney of the county. Where the prosecuting attorney fails to bring an action within ten days of the filing of the complaint, the taxpayer may bring a civil action pursuant to this section and institute an action as representative of a class of all taxpayers within a taxing authority if the class is so numerous that joinder of all members is impracticable, if there are questions of law or fact common to the class, if the claims or defenses of the representative parties are typical of the claims or defenses of the class, and if the representative parties will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class. In any class action maintained pursuant to this section, the court may direct to the members of the class a notice to be published at least once each week for four consecutive weeks in a newspaper of general circulation published in the county where the civil action is commenced and in other counties within the jurisdiction of a taxing authority. The notice shall advise each member that the court will exclude him or her from the class if he or she so requests by a specified date, that the judgment, whether favorable or not, will include all members who do not request exclusion, and that any member who does not request exclusion may, if he or she desires, enter an appearance. In any class action brought pursuant to this section, the court, in addition to the relief requested, shall assess against the taxing authority found to be in violation of this section the reasonable costs of bringing the action, including reasonable attorney's fees, provided no attorney's fees shall be awarded any attorney or association of attorneys who receive public funds from any source for their services. Any action brought pursuant to this section shall be set for hearing as soon as practicable after the cause is at issue.

9. If in any action, including a class action, the court issues an order requiring a taxing authority to revise the tax rates as provided in this section or enjoins a taxing authority from the collection of a tax because of its failure to revise the rate of levy as provided in this section, any taxpayer paying his or her taxes when an improper rate is applied has erroneously paid his or her taxes in part, whether or not the taxes are paid under protest as provided in section 139.031, RSMo. The part of the taxes paid erroneously is the difference in the amount produced by the original levy and the amount produced by the revised levy. The township or county collector of taxes or the collector of taxes in any city shall refund the amount of the tax erroneously paid. The taxing authority refusing to revise the rate of levy as provided in this section shall make available to the collector all funds necessary to make refunds pursuant to this subsection.

No taxpayer shall receive any interest on any money erroneously paid by him or her pursuant to this subsection. Effective in the 1994 tax year, nothing in this section shall be construed to require a taxing authority to refund any tax erroneously paid prior to or during the third tax year preceding the current tax year.

10. A taxing authority, including but not limited to a township, county collector, or collector of taxes, responsible for determining and collecting the amount of residential real property tax levied in its jurisdiction, shall report such amount of tax collected by December thirty-first of each year such property is assessed, to the state tax commission. The state tax commission shall compile the tax data by county or taxing jurisdiction and submit a report to the general assembly no later than January thirty-first of the following year.

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