



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Turning 65? Cut Your Property Taxes With Enhanced STAR

PATTY RITCHIE February 12, 2012

My top priority as your State Senator has been to hold the line on taxes. That's why I voted to cut taxes and spending at the state level, and I've been working with your local representatives to help lower the cost of government to provide relief to hardworking taxpayers.

But if you're turning 65 anytime this year, you should know there is something you can do to reduce your property tax bill right now. You could be eligible for additional property tax savings through the state's "Enhanced STAR" program.

The deadline to apply is March 1. In the City of Watertown, the deadline to apply is Nov. 1.

You are probably already aware of the Basic STAR which is available to anyone who owns and lives in a 1, 2 or 3 family house, condominium or cooperative apartment and earns less than \$500,000 a year. There is no age limit for Basic STAR, which exempts the first \$30,000 of the full value of a home from school taxes. Once you are approved for Basic STAR, you need not reapply each year unless you move to a new primary residence.

If you or your spouse turn 65 at any time in 2012, you may be eligible for the Enhanced STAR exemption. If you have any family member turning 65 this year, you may want to make sure they are aware that they may be eligible to reduce their tax payment. You must own property that you use as your primary residence, and the total annual income of all the owners of the property must be \$79,050 or less, based on 2010 Income Tax Returns.

If you meet these qualifications, you must complete an application for Enhanced Star that is available from your local assessor's office or by downloading the form below. If you qualify, the program exempts the first \$62,200 of the full value of your home from school taxes.

You can have New York State's Department of Taxation and Finance verify your income eligibility each year if you file an annual state income tax return and you enroll in the STAR Income Verification Program. If you qualify for the enhanced benefit, but choose not to enroll in the STAR Income Verification Program, you will need to reapply each year.

Please contact your local assessor if you have questions on how the program works.

I hope this information helps. In the weeks ahead, I will be working with my colleagues to continue the STAR program and to help bring needed tax relief to people like you.