

Frequently Asked Questions about the Florida Homestead Exemption

This document is intended to give you a thumbnail sketch of the Florida Homestead Law. For specific questions about the law please contact the property appraiser's office in your county.

What is the Florida Homestead Exemption?

All legal Florida residents are eligible for a Homestead Exemption on their homes, condominiums, co-op apartments and certain mobile home lots. The Florida Constitution provides this tax-saving exemption on the first \$25,000 of assessed value of an owner occupied residence.

You are entitled to a Homestead Exemption if, as of January 1, you have made the property your permanent home or the permanent home of a person who is legally or naturally dependent on you.

What are the benefits of the exemption?

There are two main tax saving features associated with homesteaded property. First, there is a \$25,000 exemption on the assessed value of your property. If the annual property tax rate is 2%, then the homestead exemption would save you about \$500 per year.

However, this is just the start. In 1992, the State passed the Save our Homes amendment which, effective starting in 1995, caps increases in the annual assessment on any homesteaded property to the lesser of 3% or changes in the CPI. Over time, this works out to be a much larger benefit than the \$25,000 exemption.

Note, however, that when the homesteaded property sells or significant improvements are made to the property, the assessment is jumped to the market value, as determined by the property appraiser.

You should also know that homesteading Florida property has other benefits. Most significantly is that homesteaded property is afforded certain protection from creditors. Consult with your attorney should you have any questions about this part of the law.

Who qualifies for the exemption?

To qualify for the exemption you must own and establish the property as your primary residence on or before January 1 of the tax year for which the exemption will apply.

Certain documentation is required to prove residency. You will be asked to provide a Florida Driver License or Florida ID card and Florida tag numbers for all owned vehicles or a Florida Voter ID card.

There are no US citizenship requirements, although certain other documentation may be required if you are not a US citizen.

There is also no mandatory occupancy requirement. However, if the homestead property is ever rented (even for one day), the homestead exemption is considered abandoned and will no longer apply.

Mobile homes can be granted an exemption as long as the home is permanently affixed to the land and both the home and land are owned by the applicant.

Where/When do you file for the exemption?

Exemptions are filed with the county Property Appraiser's Office. You can file as soon as you qualify, however, application must be made by March 1 to qualify for the current year. Contact the property appraiser's office for more details about how the application process works and the information required.