

House Bill 785 (AS PASSED HOUSE AND SENATE)

By: Representative Morris of the 120th

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To provide for a homestead exemption from City of Santa Claus ad valorem taxes for
2 municipal purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed
3 value of a homestead exceeds the base year assessed value of such homestead; to provide for
4 definitions; to specify the terms and conditions of the exemption and the procedures relating
5 thereto; to provide for a referendum, effective dates, and automatic repeal; to repeal
6 conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:**

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 (a) As used in this Act, the term:

10 (1) "Ad valorem taxes for municipal purposes" means all municipal ad valorem taxes for
11 municipal purposes levied by, for, or on behalf of the City of Santa Claus, including, but
12 not limited to, ad valorem taxes to pay interest on and to retire municipal bonded
13 indebtedness.

14 (2) "Base year" means the taxable year immediately preceding the taxable year in which
15 the exemption under this Act is first granted to the most recent owner of such homestead.

16 (3) "Homestead" means homestead as defined and qualified in Code Section 48-5-40 of
17 the O.C.G.A., as amended, with the additional qualification that it shall include only the
18 primary residence and not more than five contiguous acres of land immediately
19 surrounding such residence.

20 (b) Each resident of the City of Santa Claus is granted an exemption on that person's
21 homestead from City of Santa Claus ad valorem taxes for municipal purposes in an amount
22 equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value of that homestead exceeds the
23 base year assessed value of that homestead. This exemption shall not apply to taxes assessed
24 on improvements to the homestead or additional land that is added to the homestead after
25 January 1 of the base year. If any real property is removed from the homestead, the base year

1 assessed value shall be recalculated accordingly. The value of that property in excess of such
2 exempted amount shall remain subject to taxation.

3 (c) A person shall not receive the homestead exemption granted by subsection (b) of this
4 section unless the person or person's agent files an application with the governing authority
5 of the City of Santa Claus, or the designee thereof, giving such information relative to
6 receiving such exemption as will enable the governing authority of the City of Santa Claus,
7 or the designee thereof, to make a determination regarding the initial and continuing
8 eligibility of such owner for such exemption. The governing authority of the City of Santa
9 Claus, or the designee thereof, shall provide application forms for this purpose.

10 (d) The exemption shall be claimed and returned as provided in Code Section 48-5-50.1 of
11 the O.C.G.A., as amended. The exemption shall be automatically renewed from year to year
12 as long as the owner occupies the residence as a homestead. After a person has filed the
13 proper application as provided in subsection (c) of this section, it shall not be necessary to
14 make application thereafter for any year and the exemption shall continue to be allowed to
15 such person. It shall be the duty of any person granted the homestead exemption under
16 subsection (b) of this section to notify the governing authority of the City of Santa Claus, or
17 the designee thereof, in the event that person for any reason becomes ineligible for that
18 exemption.

19 (e) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall not apply to or affect state
20 ad valorem taxes, county ad valorem taxes for county purposes, or county or independent
21 school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes. The homestead exemption granted
22 by subsection (b) of this section shall be in addition to and not in lieu of any other homestead
23 exemption applicable to municipal ad valorem taxes for municipal purposes.

24 (f) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall apply to all taxable years
25 beginning on or after January 1, 2005.

26

SECTION 2.

27 Unless prohibited by the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, as amended, the municipal
28 election superintendent of the City of Santa Claus shall call and conduct an election as
29 provided in this section for the purpose of submitting this Act to the electors of the City of
30 Santa Claus for approval or rejection. The municipal election superintendent shall conduct
31 that election on the date of the November, 2004, general election and shall issue the call and
32 conduct that election as provided by general law. The municipal superintendent shall cause
33 the date and purpose of the election to be published once a week for two weeks immediately
34 preceding the date thereof in the official organ of Toombs County. The ballot shall have
35 written or printed thereon the words:

1 () YES Shall the Act be approved which provides a homestead exemption from City
2 of Santa Claus ad valorem taxes for municipal purposes in an amount equal
3 () NO to the amount by which the current year assessed value of a homestead
4 exceeds the base year assessed value of such homestead?"

5 All persons desiring to vote for approval of the Act shall vote "Yes," and those persons
6 desiring to vote for rejection of the Act shall vote "No." If more than one-half of the votes
7 cast on such question are for approval of the Act, Section 1 of this Act shall become of full
8 force and effect on January 1, 2005. If the Act is not so approved or if the election is not
9 conducted as provided in this section, Section 1 of this Act shall not become effective and
10 this Act shall be automatically repealed on the first day of January immediately following
11 that election date. The expense of such election shall be borne by the City of Santa Claus.
12 It shall be the municipal election superintendent's duty to certify the result thereof to the
13 Secretary of State.

14 **SECTION 3.**

15 Except as otherwise provided in Section 2 of this Act, this Act shall become effective upon
16 its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

17 **SECTION 4.**

18 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.