

The Senate Finance Committee offered the following substitute to SR 796:

## A RESOLUTION

1 Proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to provide for ad valorem tax reform; to  
 2 freeze the valuation of real property except for certain adjustments; to provide for  
 3 procedures, conditions, and limitations for certain increases; to provide procedures for  
 4 increasing or decreasing millage rates on taxes for educational purposes; to provide for  
 5 ratification of certain exemptions and assessment freezes which were previously enacted; to  
 6 provide for applicability; to provide for the submission of this amendment for ratification or  
 7 rejection; and for other purposes.

8 BE IT RESOLVED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

### SECTION 1.

9 Article VII, Section I of the Constitution is amended by revising Paragraph III and by adding  
 10 new Paragraph to read as follows:

11 "Paragraph III. ***Uniformity Applicability of uniformity; exceptions; classification of***  
 12 ***property; assessment of agricultural land; conservation use; timber; utilities.*** (a) All  
 13 taxes shall be levied and collected under general laws and for public purposes only. ~~Except~~  
 14 ~~as otherwise provided in subparagraphs (b), (c), (d), and (e), all~~ All taxation shall be  
 15 uniform upon the same class of subjects within the territorial limits of the authority levying  
 16 the tax. This uniformity requirement shall not apply to residential and nonresidential real  
 17 property.

18 (b)(1) Except as otherwise provided in this ~~subparagraph (b) Paragraph~~, classes of  
 19 subjects for taxation of property shall consist of residential and nonresidential real  
 20 property, other tangible property, and one or more classes of intangible personal property  
 21 including money; provided, however, that any taxation of intangible personal property  
 22 may be repealed by general law without approval in a referendum effective for all taxable  
 23 years beginning on or after January 1, 1996.

24 (2) Subject to the conditions and limitations specified by law, each of the following  
 25 types of property may be classified as a separate class of property for ad valorem property  
 26

1 tax purposes and different rates, methods, and assessment dates may be provided for such  
2 properties:

3 (A) Trailers.

4 (B) Mobile homes other than those mobile homes which qualify the owner of the  
5 home for a homestead exemption from ad valorem taxation.

6 (C) Heavy-duty equipment motor vehicles owned by nonresidents and operated in  
7 this state.

8 (3) Motor vehicles may be classified as a separate class of property for ad valorem  
9 property tax purposes, and such class may be divided into separate subclasses for ad  
10 valorem purposes. The General Assembly may provide by general law for the ad valorem  
11 taxation of motor vehicles including, but not limited to, providing for different rates,  
12 methods, assessment dates, and taxpayer liability for such class and for each of its  
13 subclasses and need not provide for uniformity of taxation with other classes of property  
14 or between or within its subclasses. The General Assembly may also determine what  
15 portion of any ad valorem tax on motor vehicles shall be retained by the state. As used  
16 in this subparagraph, the term 'motor vehicles' means all vehicles which are  
17 self-propelled.

18 (c) ~~Tangible~~ Subject to the limitations of Paragraph IV of this section, tangible real  
19 property, but no more than 2,000 acres of any single property owner, which is devoted to  
20 bona fide agricultural purposes shall be assessed for ad valorem taxation purposes at 75  
21 percent of the value which other tangible real property is assessed. No property shall be  
22 entitled to receive the preferential assessment provided for in this subparagraph if the  
23 property which would otherwise receive such assessment would result in any person who  
24 has a beneficial interest in such property, including any interest in the nature of stock  
25 ownership, receiving the benefit of such preferential assessment as to more than 2,000  
26 acres. No property shall be entitled to receive the preferential assessment provided for in  
27 this subparagraph unless the conditions set out below are met:

28 (1) The property must be owned by:

29 (A)(i) One or more natural or naturalized citizens;

30 (ii) An estate of which the devisee or heirs are one or more natural or naturalized  
31 citizens; or

32 (iii) A trust of which the beneficiaries are one or more natural or naturalized  
33 citizens; or

34 (B) A family-owned farm corporation, the controlling interest of which is owned by  
35 individuals related to each other within the fourth degree of civil reckoning, or which  
36 is owned by an estate of which the devisee or heirs are one or more natural or  
37 naturalized citizens, or which is owned by a trust of which the beneficiaries are one or

1 more natural or naturalized citizens, and such corporation derived 80 percent or more  
2 of its gross income from bona fide agricultural pursuits within this state within the year  
3 immediately preceding the year in which eligibility is sought.

4 (2) The General Assembly shall provide by law:

5 (A) For a definition of the term 'bona fide agricultural purposes,' but such term shall  
6 include timber production;

7 (B) For additional minimum conditions of eligibility which such properties must  
8 meet in order to qualify for the preferential assessment provided for herein, including,  
9 but not limited to, the requirement that the owner be required to enter into a covenant  
10 with the appropriate taxing authorities to maintain the use of the properties in bona fide  
11 agricultural purposes for a period of not less than ten years and for appropriate penalties  
12 for the breach of any such covenant.

13 (3) In addition to the specific conditions set forth in this subparagraph (c), the General  
14 Assembly may place further restrictions upon, but may not relax, the conditions of  
15 eligibility for the preferential assessment provided for herein.

16 (d)(1) ~~The~~ Subject to the limitations of Paragraph IV of this section, the General  
17 Assembly shall be authorized by general law to establish as a separate class of property  
18 for ad valorem tax purposes any tangible real property which is listed in the National  
19 Register of Historic Places or in a state historic register authorized by general law. For  
20 such purposes, the General Assembly is authorized by general law to establish a program  
21 by which certain properties within such class may be assessed for taxes at different rates  
22 or valuations in order to encourage the preservation of such historic properties and to  
23 assist in the revitalization of historic areas.

24 (2) ~~The~~ Subject to the limitations of Paragraph IV of this section, the General  
25 Assembly shall be authorized by general law to establish as a separate class of property  
26 for ad valorem tax purposes any tangible real property on which there have been releases  
27 of hazardous waste, constituents, or substances into the environment. For such purposes,  
28 the General Assembly is authorized by general law to establish a program by which  
29 certain properties within such class may be assessed for taxes at different rates or  
30 valuations in order to encourage the cleanup, reuse, and redevelopment of such properties  
31 and to assist in the revitalization thereof by encouraging remedial action.

32 (e) ~~The~~ Subject to the limitations of Paragraph IV of this section, the General Assembly  
33 shall provide by general law:

34 (1) For the definition and methods of assessment and taxation, such methods to include  
35 a formula based on current use, annual productivity, and real property sales data, of: 'bona  
36 fide conservation use property' to include bona fide agricultural and timber land not to  
37 exceed 2,000 acres of a single owner; and 'bona fide residential transitional property,' to

1 include private single-family residential owner occupied property located in transitional  
 2 developing areas not to exceed five acres of any single owner. Such methods of  
 3 assessment and taxation shall be subject to the following conditions:

4 (A) A property owner desiring the benefit of such methods of assessment and  
 5 taxation shall be required to enter into a covenant to continue the property in bona fide  
 6 conservation use or bona fide residential transitional use; and

7 (B) A breach of such covenant within ten years shall result in a recapture of the tax  
 8 savings resulting from such methods of assessment and taxation and may result in other  
 9 appropriate penalties;

10 (2) That standing timber shall be assessed only once, and such assessment shall be  
 11 made following its harvest or sale and on the basis of its fair market value at the time of  
 12 harvest or sale. Said assessment shall be two and one-half times the assessed percentage  
 13 of value fixed by law for other real property taxed under the uniformity provisions of  
 14 subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph but in no event greater than its fair market value; and  
 15 for a method of temporary supplementation of the property tax digest of any county if the  
 16 implementation of this method of taxing timber reduces the tax digest by more than 20  
 17 percent, such supplemental assessed value to be assigned to the properties otherwise  
 18 benefiting from such method of taxing timber.

19 (f) The Subject to the limitations of Paragraph IV of this section, the General Assembly  
 20 may provide for a different method and time of returns, assessments, payment, and  
 21 collection of ad valorem taxes of public utilities, but not on a greater assessed percentage  
 22 of value or at a higher rate of taxation than other properties, except that property provided  
 23 for in subparagraph (c), (d), or (e) of this Paragraph.

24 Paragraph IV. *Limitations on assessed value increases for real property.* (a)(1) Except  
 25 as otherwise provided in this Paragraph, the assessed value of residential real property and  
 26 nonresidential real property for all ad valorem tax purposes shall not be increased from the  
 27 valuation established for 2008. Additions or improvements to such residential real property  
 28 and nonresidential real property placed in service after December 31, 2007, shall be  
 29 appraised for ad valorem tax purposes at their fair market value and shall be added to the  
 30 owner's 2008 valuation amount.

31 (2) If such residential real property or nonresidential real property is sold or transferred  
 32 to another person, such residential real property or nonresidential real property shall be  
 33 appraised for ad valorem tax purposes at fair market value.

34 (3) The 2008 valuation amount for any individual parcel of residential real property  
 35 may be increased during the 2010 taxable year by an amount not to exceed a 4 percent  
 36 increase in such value and, for each taxable year thereafter, by an amount not to exceed  
 37 a 2 percent increase in such value. The 2008 valuation for any individual parcel of

1 nonresidential real property may be increased during any taxable year by an amount not  
2 to exceed a 6 percent increase in such value and, for each taxable year thereafter, by an  
3 amount not to exceed a 3 percent increase in such value. The percentage limitations of  
4 this provision shall not be construed to prohibit the mass appraisal of real property in a  
5 county.

6 (b) As used in subparagraph (c) of this Paragraph, the term 'established property' means  
7 any individual parcel of residential real property or nonresidential real property which has  
8 not been subdivided or substantially improved, sold, or transferred during the previous 12  
9 month period.

10 (c) The valuations established under subparagraph (a) of this Paragraph may be further  
11 increased, but only under the following conditions:

12 (1) Each county shall adopt by majority vote a uniform process for assessment of  
13 residential real property or nonresidential real property. Such process shall be utilized  
14 by the county and by each local taxing jurisdiction in such county. Such process shall  
15 conform to any guidelines set forth by general law and shall provide:

16 (A) A maximum allowable percentage increase from assessed value of established  
17 property during any taxable year; and

18 (B) That any individual parcel of residential real property or nonresidential real  
19 property sold or transferred to another person shall be assessed for ad valorem tax  
20 purposes at fair market value; and

21 (2) Such procedure shall become effective only upon its adoption by an ordinance or  
22 resolution of the governing body of such local taxing jurisdiction and also by a local Act  
23 of the General Assembly conditioned upon approval by a majority vote of the qualified  
24 electors residing within the limits of the local taxing jurisdiction voting in a referendum  
25 thereon.

26 (d) The General Assembly shall be authorized by general law to further define and  
27 implement the provisions of this Paragraph including, but specifically not limited to,  
28 definitions of residential real property and nonresidential real property.

29 (e) Any local or general law providing for base year assessed value homestead  
30 exemptions that freeze the assessment of property with respect to any or all ad valorem  
31 taxes enacted prior to January 1, 2010, shall be ratified expressly; provided, however, that  
32 such ratification shall not be interpreted to imply that such laws were invalid at the time  
33 they became law. The provisions of this Paragraph shall not apply to any homestead's ad  
34 valorem taxes which are the subject of any such general or local law so long as the owner  
35 of such homestead on January 1, 2010, remains the owner of such property. Upon any sale  
36 or transfer of such homestead, no subsequent owner shall be entitled to apply for and  
37 receive such exemption or exemptions on such homestead.

1 (f) This Paragraph shall not apply to any county or consolidated government for which  
2 a local constitutional amendment has been continued in force and effect as part of this  
3 Constitution which freezes ad valorem property taxes unless such local constitutional  
4 amendment is repealed."

5 **SECTION 2.**

6 Article VIII, Section VI of the Constitution is amended by revising Paragraph II as follows:

7 "Paragraph II. *Increasing or removing decreasing tax rate.* The mill limitation in effect  
8 on June 30, 1983, for any school system may be increased ~~or removed by action of the~~  
9 ~~respective boards of education~~ or decreased but only after such action has been approved  
10 by a local Act of the General Assembly conditioned on approval by a majority of the  
11 qualified voters voting thereon in the particular school system to be affected ~~in the manner~~  
12 ~~provided by law."~~

13 **SECTION 3.**

14 The above proposed amendment to the Constitution shall be published and submitted as  
15 provided in Article X, Section I, Paragraph II of the Constitution. The ballot submitting the  
16 above proposed amendment shall have written or printed thereon the following:

17 "( ) YES Shall the Constitution of Georgia be amended so as to provide for ad  
18 valorem tax reform, to freeze real property values except for limited  
19 ( ) NO adjustments but allow future increases if approved by voters in a referendum,  
20 to provide for ratification of similar freeze exemptions which were  
21 previously enacted, and to provide procedures for increasing or decreasing  
22 millage rates on taxes for educational purposes?"

23 All persons desiring to vote in favor of ratifying the proposed amendment shall vote "Yes."

24 All persons desiring to vote against ratifying the proposed amendment shall vote "No." If  
25 such amendment shall be ratified as provided in said Paragraph of the Constitution, it shall  
26 become a part of the Constitution of this state effective January 1, 2010.