

House Bill 362

By: Representatives Stephens of the 164<sup>th</sup>, Petrea of the 166<sup>th</sup>, and Franklin of the 160<sup>th</sup>

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT

1 To provide a homestead exemption from Bryan County school district ad valorem taxes for  
2 educational purposes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed  
3 value of a homestead exceeds the adjusted base year assessed value of such homestead; to  
4 provide for definitions; to specify the terms and conditions of the exemption and the  
5 procedures relating thereto; to provide for applicability; to provide for compliance with  
6 constitutional requirements; to provide for a referendum, effective dates, automatic repeal,  
7 mandatory execution of election, and judicial remedies regarding failure to comply; to  
8 provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

9 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

10 **SECTION 1.**

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

12 (1) "Ad valorem taxes" means all ad valorem taxes levied by, for, or on behalf of the  
13 Bryan County school district for educational purposes, except for any ad valorem taxes  
14 levied to pay interest on and to retire bonded indebtedness.

15 (2) "Adjusted base year assessed value" means the sum of:

16 (A) The previous adjusted base year assessed value;

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17 (B) An amount equal to the difference between the current year assessed value of the  
18 homestead and the base year assessed value of the homestead, provided that such  
19 amount shall not exceed the total of the previous adjusted base year assessed value of  
20 the homestead multiplied by the inflation rate for the prior year; and

21 (C) The value of any substantial property change, provided that no such value added  
22 improvements to the homestead shall be duplicated as to the same addition or  
23 improvement.

24 (3) "Base year assessed value" means:

25 (A) With respect to an exemption under this section which is first granted to a person  
26 on such person's homestead for the 2026 taxable year, the assessed value for taxable  
27 year 2025, including any final determination of value on appeal pursuant to Code  
28 Section 48-5-311 of the O.C.G.A., of the homestead; or

29 (B) In all other cases, the assessed value, including any final determination of value on  
30 appeal pursuant to Code Section 48-5-311 of the O.C.G.A., of the homestead from the  
31 taxable year immediately preceding the taxable year in which the exemption under this  
32 section is first granted to the applicant.

33 (4) "Homestead" means homestead as defined and qualified in Code Section 48-5-40 of  
34 the O.C.G.A., as amended, with the additional qualification that it shall include not more  
35 than five contiguous acres of homestead property.

36 (5) "Inflation rate" means the annual inflationary index rate as determined for a given  
37 year by the Bryan County tax commissioner in accordance with subsection (f) of this  
38 section.

39 (6) "Previous adjusted base year assessed value" means:

40 (A) With respect to the year for which the exemption under this section is first granted  
41 to a person on such person's homestead, the base year assessed value; or

42 (B) In all other cases, the adjusted base year assessed value of the homestead as  
43 calculated in the taxable year immediately preceding the current year, including any

44 final determination of value on appeal pursuant to Code Section 48-5-311 of the  
45 O.C.G.A.

46 (7) "Substantial property change" means any increase or decrease in the assessed value  
47 of a homestead derived from additions or improvements to, or the removal of real  
48 property from, the homestead which occurred after the year in which the base year  
49 assessed value is determined for the homestead. The assessed value of the substantial  
50 property changes shall be established following any final determination of value on  
51 appeal pursuant to Code Section 48-5-311 of the O.C.G.A.

52 (b)(1) Subject to the limitations provided in this section, each resident of the Bryan  
53 County school district is granted an exemption on that person's homestead from ad  
54 valorem taxes in an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value  
55 of that homestead, including any final determination of value on appeal pursuant to Code  
56 Section 48-5-311, exceeds its previous adjusted base year assessed value.

57 (2) Except as provided for in subsection (c) of this section, no exemption provided for  
58 in this subsection shall transfer to any subsequent owner of the property, and the assessed  
59 value of the property shall be as provided by law.

60 (c) No person shall receive the exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section unless  
61 such person or person's agent files an application with the tax commissioner of Bryan  
62 County as will enable the tax commissioner to make a determination regarding the initial  
63 and continuing eligibility of such person for such exemption; provided, however, that any  
64 person who had previously applied for a homestead exemption, was allowed such  
65 homestead exemption for the 2025 tax year, and remains eligible for a homestead  
66 exemption for that same homestead property in the 2026 tax year shall be automatically  
67 allowed the exemption granted under subsection (b) of this section for that homestead  
68 without further application. The tax commissioner shall provide application forms for this  
69 purpose.

70 (d) The exemption shall be claimed and returned as provided in Code Section 48-5-50.1  
71 of the O.C.G.A., as amended. The exemption shall be automatically renewed from year  
72 to year so long as the person granted the homestead exemption under subsection (b) of this  
73 section occupies the residence as a homestead. After such person has filed the proper  
74 application as provided in subsection (c) of this section, it shall not be necessary to make  
75 application thereafter for any year, and such exemption shall continue to be allowed to such  
76 person. It shall be the duty of any such person granted the homestead exemption under  
77 subsection (b) of this section to notify the tax commissioner of Bryan County in the event  
78 that such person for any reason becomes ineligible for such exemption.

79 (e)(1) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall not apply to or affect  
80 any state ad valorem taxes, county ad valorem taxes for county purposes, independent  
81 school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes, or municipal ad valorem taxes  
82 for municipal purposes.

83 (2) Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (3) of this subsection, the homestead  
84 exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall be in addition to and not in lieu  
85 of any other homestead exemption applicable to ad valorem taxes.

86 (3) The homestead exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall not be  
87 applied in addition to any other base year value homestead exemption provided by law  
88 with respect to the Bryan County school district. In any such event, the Bryan County  
89 tax commissioner shall apply only the base year value homestead exemption that is larger  
90 or more beneficial for the taxpayer with respect to the Bryan County school district.

91 (f) For the purposes of this section, the Bryan County tax commissioner shall promulgate  
92 a standardized method for determining annual inflationary index rates which reflect the  
93 effects of inflation and deflation on the cost of living for residents of Bryan County for a  
94 given calendar year. Such method may utilize the Consumer Price Index as reported by the  
95 Bureau of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor or any other similar  
96 index established by the federal government if the Bryan County tax commissioner

97 determines that such federal index fairly reflects the effects of inflation and deflation on  
 98 residents of the Bryan County school district.

99 (g) The exemption granted by subsection (b) of this section shall apply to all taxable years  
 100 beginning on or after January 1, 2026.

101 **SECTION 2.**

102 In accordance with the requirements of Article VII, Section II of the Constitution of the State  
 103 of Georgia, this Act shall not become law unless it receives the requisite two-thirds' majority  
 104 vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

105 **SECTION 3.**

106 The election superintendent of Bryan County shall call and conduct an election as provided  
 107 in this section for the purpose of submitting this Act to the electors of the Bryan County  
 108 school district for approval or rejection. The election superintendent shall conduct that  
 109 election on the Tuesday following the first Monday in November of 2025 and shall issue the  
 110 call and conduct that election as provided by general law. The election superintendent shall  
 111 cause the date and purpose of the election to be published once a week for two weeks  
 112 immediately preceding the date thereof in the official organ of Bryan County. The ballot  
 113 shall have written or printed thereon the words:

114 "( ) YES Shall the Act be approved which provides a homestead exemption from  
 115 Bryan County school district ad valorem taxes for educational purposes in  
 116 ( ) NO an amount equal to the amount by which the current year assessed value of  
 117 a homestead exceeds the adjusted base year assessed value, including any  
 118 final determination of value on appeal pursuant to Code Section 48-5-311  
 119 of the O.C.G.A., as amended, of such homestead?"

120 All persons desiring to vote for approval of the Act shall vote "Yes," and all persons desiring  
 121 to vote for rejection of the Act shall vote "No." If more than one-half of the votes cast on

122 such question are for approval of the Act, Section 1 of this Act shall become of full force and  
123 effect on January 1, 2026. If the Act is not so approved or if the election is not conducted  
124 as provided in this section, Section 1 of this Act shall not become effective, and this Act shall  
125 be automatically repealed on the 365th calendar day following the election date provided for  
126 in this section. The expense of such election shall be borne by Bryan County. It shall be the  
127 election superintendent's duty to certify the result thereof to the Secretary of State. The  
128 provisions of this section shall be mandatory upon the election superintendent and are not  
129 intended as directory. If the election superintendent fails or refuses to comply with this  
130 section, any elector of the Bryan County school district may apply for a writ of mandamus  
131 to compel the election superintendent to perform his or her duties under this section. If the  
132 court finds that the election superintendent has not complied with this section, the court shall  
133 fashion appropriate relief requiring the election superintendent to call and conduct such  
134 election on the date required by this section or on the next date authorized for special  
135 elections provided for in Code Section 21-2-540 of the O.C.G.A.

136 **SECTION 4.**

137 Except as otherwise provided in Section 3 of this Act, this Act shall become effective upon  
138 its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law without such approval.

139 **SECTION 5.**

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