

Governor Riley Orders Property Tax Refunds in Light of New AG Opinion

MONTGOMERY – Governor Bob Riley today announced the state will refund property taxes to Alabamians who did not receive homestead exemptions that a new Attorney General’s opinion says they were entitled to.

The move comes after an Attorney General’s opinion released on Oct. 25 that Governor Riley and Commissioner Surtees sought to clarify the application of tax exemptions to jointly-owned properties for the disabled and those older than 65.

“I fully support the Attorney General’s opinion and am pleased we were able to get this matter clarified,” Governor Riley said. “Alabama law allows us to refund property taxes going back two years, and we will provide that tax relief for all citizens who did not properly receive the exemptions they should have.”

“I’m sure that I join all local assessing and collecting officials across the state in saying that I am very pleased that we have the clarification needed to ensure that these exemptions will be applied consistently statewide,” said Surtees.

Surtees has notified all county assessing and collecting officials by letter and informed them of the Oct. 25 opinion from the Attorney General. Copies of the opinion were also provided.

After meeting with Governor Riley on Oct. 19, Surtees wrote Attorney General Troy King and requested that he issue an opinion clarifying a 1979 property tax exemption policy. Governor Riley said there was “ambiguity” surrounding the policy and stated that it needed clarification.

The policy change came about after the Examiners of Public Accounts said an earlier AG opinion, written in 1979 by then-Attorney General Charles Graddick, requires county revenue commissioners to grant joint property owners a homestead exemption based on their ownership interest in the property

Governor Riley and Surtees are advising property owners who have paid taxes in error during the last two years to contact their local collecting official for refund procedures applicable to their particular county.

“The Revenue Department supports the opinion and will address any future questions related to the application of homestead exemptions based on the guidance provided in the Oct. 25 opinion,” Surtees wrote in his letter to local officials.

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For more information, contact the Governor’s Press Office at 334-242-7150.