

**The Florida Senate**  
**BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

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Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Finance and Tax

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BILL: SJR 618

INTRODUCER: Senator Simon

SUBJECT: Homestead Property Tax Exemption for the Surviving Spouse of Certain Quadriplegics

DATE: February 12, 2024      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Hackett</u>	<u>Ryon</u>	<u>CA</u>	<b>Favorable</b>
2.	<u>Shuler</u>	<u>Khan</u>	<u>FT</u>	<b>Pre-meeting</b>
3.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____

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**I. Summary:**

SJR 618 proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution to permit the legislature to provide ad valorem tax relief to the surviving spouse of a quadriplegic who was receiving a property tax exemption on their homestead property at the time of their death.

If adopted by the Legislature, the proposed amendment will be submitted to Florida’s electors for approval or rejection at the next general election in November 2024.

If approved by at least 60 percent of the electors, the proposed amendment will take effect on January 1, 2025.

**II. Present Situation:**

**General Overview of Property Taxation**

The ad valorem tax or “property tax” is an annual tax levied by counties, municipalities, school districts, and some special districts. The tax is based on the taxable value of property as of January 1 of each year.<sup>1</sup> The property appraiser annually determines the “just value”<sup>2</sup> of property within the taxing authority and then applies relevant exclusions, assessment limitations, and

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<sup>1</sup> Both real property and tangible personal property are subject to tax. Section 192.001(12), F.S., defines “real property” as land, buildings, fixtures, and all other improvements to land. Section 192.001(11)(d), F.S., defines “tangible personal property” as all goods, chattels, and other articles of value capable of manual possession and whose chief value is intrinsic to the article itself.

<sup>2</sup> Property must be valued at “just value” for purposes of property taxation, unless the Florida Constitution provides otherwise. FLA. CONST. art VII, s. 4. Just value has been interpreted by the courts to mean the fair market value that a willing buyer would pay a willing seller for the property in an arm’s-length transaction. *See, e.g., Walter v. Schuler*, 176 So. 2d 81 (Fla. 1965); *Deltona Corp. v. Bailey*, 336 So. 2d 1163 (Fla. 1976); *S. Bell Tel. & Tel. Co. v. Dade Cnty.*, 275 So. 2d 4 (Fla. 1973).

exemptions to determine the property's "taxable value."<sup>3</sup> Property tax bills are mailed in November of each year based on the previous January 1 valuation and full payment is due by March 31 of the following year.

The Florida Constitution prohibits the state from levying ad valorem taxes<sup>4</sup> and limits the Legislature's authority to provide for property valuations at less than just value, unless expressly authorized.<sup>5</sup>

### **Property Tax Exemptions for Homesteads**

#### ***Statewide Homestead Exemption***

Every person having legal and equitable title to real estate and who maintains a permanent residence on the real estate (homestead property) is eligible for a \$25,000 tax exemption applicable to all ad valorem tax levies, including levies by school districts.<sup>6</sup> An additional \$25,000 exemption applies to homestead property value between \$50,000 and \$75,000.<sup>7</sup> This exemption does not apply to ad valorem taxes levied by school districts.

#### ***Homestead Exemption for the Blind or Totally and Permanently Disabled***

Article VII, s. 3(b) of the State Constitution, requires that general law establish an exemption of property tax for widows and widowers, and persons who are blind or totally and permanently disabled. Subsections (1) and (2) of s. 196.101, F.S., exempt the total value of a homestead used and owned by a person who has been certified<sup>8</sup> as totally and permanently disabled, including any quadriplegic, paraplegic, or hemiplegic.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

The joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Florida Constitution to permit the legislature to provide ad valorem tax relief to the surviving spouse of a quadriplegic who was receiving a property tax exemption on their homestead property at the time of their death.

If adopted by the Legislature, the proposed amendment will be submitted to Florida's electors for approval or rejection at the next general election in November 2024.

If approved by at least 60 percent of the electors, the proposed amendment will take effect on January 1, 2025.

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<sup>3</sup> See s. 192.001(2) and (16), F.S.

<sup>4</sup> FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 1(a).

<sup>5</sup> See FLA. CONST. art. VII, s. 4.

<sup>6</sup> FLA. CONST. art VII, s. 6(a) and s. 196.031(1)(a), F.S.

<sup>7</sup> FLA. CONST. art VII, s. 6(a) and s. 196.031(1)(b), F.S.

<sup>8</sup> Section 196.101(3), F.S., permits the use of certification from two licensed Florida doctors or from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as proof of total and permanent disability.

**IV. Constitutional Issues:****A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

The mandate provisions in Article VII, section 18 of the Florida Constitution, do not apply to joint resolutions.

**B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

**C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

**D. State Tax or Fee Increases:**

None.

**E. Other Constitutional Issues:**

Article XI, s. 1 of the Florida Constitution authorizes the Legislature to propose amendments to the Florida Constitution by joint resolution approved by a three-fifths vote of the membership of each house. Article XI, s. 5(a) of the Florida Constitution requires the amendment be placed before the electorate at the next general election<sup>9</sup> held more than 90 days after the proposal has been filed with the Secretary of State or at a special election held for that purpose. Constitutional amendments submitted to the electors must be printed in clear and unambiguous language on the ballot.<sup>10</sup>

Article XI, s. 5(d) of the Florida Constitution requires proposed amendments or constitutional revisions to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county where a newspaper is published. The amendment or revision must be published once in the 10th week and again in the 6th week immediately preceding the week the election is held.

Article XI, s. 5(e) of the Florida Constitution requires approval by 60 percent of voters for a constitutional amendment to take effect. The amendment, if approved, becomes effective on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in January following the election, or on such other date as may be specified in the amendment.

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<sup>9</sup> Section 97.021(17), F.S., defines “general election” as an election held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in the even-numbered years, for the purpose of filling national, state, county, and district offices and for voting on constitutional amendments not otherwise provided for by law.

<sup>10</sup> Section 101.161(1), F.S.

**V. Fiscal Impact Statement:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

The Revenue Estimating Conference reviewed this bill and adopted a zero impact because this is a joint resolution proposing an amendment to be submitted to the voters, which is not self-executing.<sup>11</sup> However, if the joint resolution is approved by the electors, and the implementing bill, CS/SB 616, becomes law, the Conference determined that the provisions would have a negative recurring impact on school tax revenue of \$0.4 million and \$0.6 million on non-school local government tax revenue beginning in Fiscal Year 2024-2025.<sup>12</sup>

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

None.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

Article XI, Section 5(d) of the Florida Constitution requires proposed amendments or constitutional revisions to be published in a newspaper of general circulation in each county where a newspaper is published. The amendment or revision must be published in the 10th week and again in the 6th week immediately preceding the week the election is held.

The Division of Elections (division) within the Department of State pays for publication costs to advertise all constitutional amendments in both English and Spanish,<sup>13</sup> typically paid from non-recurring General Revenue funds.<sup>14</sup> Accurate cost estimates for the next constitutional amendment advertising cannot be determined until the total number of amendments to be advertised is known and updated quotes are obtained from newspapers.

There is an unknown additional cost for the printing and distributing of the constitutional amendments, in poster or booklet form, in English and Spanish, for each of the 67 Supervisors of Elections to post or make available at each polling room or each voting site, as required by s. 101.171, F.S. Historically, the division has printed and distributed booklets that include the ballot title, ballot summary, text of the constitutional amendment, and, if applicable, the financial impact statement.

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<sup>11</sup> OFF. OF ECON. & DEMOGRAPHIC RSCH, *Revenue Estimating Conference Impact Results: HJR 53 / SB 618*, 6-8 (Nov. 3, 2023), available at [http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2024/\\_pdf/impact1103.pdf](http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2024/_pdf/impact1103.pdf) (last visited Feb. 6, 2024).

<sup>12</sup> OFF. OF ECON. & DEMOGRAPHIC RSCH, *Revenue Estimating Conference Impact Results: HB 55 / SB 616*, 9-11 (Nov. 3, 2023), available at [http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2024/\\_pdf/impact1103.pdf](http://edr.state.fl.us/content/conferences/revenueimpact/archives/2024/_pdf/impact1103.pdf) (last visited Feb. 5, 2024).

<sup>13</sup> Pursuant to *Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act (52 U.S.C.A. § 10503)*.

<sup>14</sup> *See, e.g., Ch. 2022-156, Specific Appropriation 3137, Laws of Fla.*

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Statutes Affected:**

This resolution substantially amends section 6, Article VII of the Florida Constitution.

This resolution also creates a new section in Article XII of the Florida Constitution.

**IX. Additional Information:**

**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

**B. Amendments:**

None.