

AN ACT

RELATING TO TAXATION; PROVIDING A PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION FOR VETERANS' ORGANIZATIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE CONSTITUTION OF NEW MEXICO.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

**SECTION 1.** A new section of Chapter 7, Article 37 NMSA 1978 is enacted to read:

"VETERANS' ORGANIZATION EXEMPTION.--The property of a veterans' organization chartered by the United States congress and that is used primarily for the benefit of veterans and their families is exempt from property taxation. The exemption provided by this section may be referred to as the "veterans' organization exemption". The veterans' organization exemption shall be applied only if claimed and allowed pursuant to Section 7-38-17 NMSA 1978 and the rules of the department. The veterans' services department shall assist the taxation and revenue department and the county assessors in determining which veterans' organizations qualify for the veterans' organization exemption."

**SECTION 2.** Section 7-38-17 NMSA 1978 (being Laws 1973, Chapter 258, Section 57, as amended) is amended to read:

"7-38-17. CLAIMING EXEMPTIONS--REQUIREMENTS--PENALTIES.--

A. Subject to the requirements of Subsection E of

this section, head-of-family exemptions, veteran exemptions, disabled veteran exemptions or veterans' organization exemptions claimed and allowed in a tax year need not be claimed for subsequent tax years if there is no change in eligibility for the exemption nor any change in ownership of the property against which the exemption was claimed. Head-of-family, veteran and veterans' organization exemptions allowable under this subsection shall be applied automatically by county assessors in the subsequent tax years.

B. Other exemptions of real property specified under Section 7-36-7 NMSA 1978 for nongovernmental entities shall be claimed in order to be allowed. Once such exemptions are claimed and allowed for a tax year, they need not be claimed for subsequent tax years if there is no change in eligibility. Exemptions allowable under this subsection shall be applied automatically by county assessors in subsequent tax years.

C. Except as set forth in Subsection H of this section, an exemption required to be claimed under this section shall be applied for no later than thirty days after the mailing of the county assessor's notices of valuation pursuant to Section 7-38-20 NMSA 1978 in order for it to be allowed for that tax year.

D. A person who has had an exemption applied to a tax year and subsequently becomes ineligible for the exemption

because of a change in the person's status or a change in the ownership of the property against which the exemption was applied shall notify the county assessor of the loss of eligibility for the exemption by the last day of February of the tax year immediately following the year in which loss of eligibility occurs.

E. Exemptions may be claimed by filing proof of eligibility for the exemption with the county assessor. The proof shall be in a form prescribed by regulation of the department. Procedures for determining eligibility of claimants for any exemption shall be prescribed by regulation of the department, and these regulations shall include provisions for requiring the veterans' services department to issue certificates of eligibility for veteran and veterans' organization exemptions in a form and with the information required by the department. The regulations shall also include verification procedures to assure that veteran exemptions in excess of the amount authorized under Section 7-37-5 NMSA 1978 are not allowed as a result of multiple claiming in more than one county or claiming against more than one property in a single tax year.

F. The department shall consult and cooperate with the veterans' services department in the development, adoption and promulgation of regulations under Subsection E of this section. The veterans' services department shall comply with

the promulgated regulations. The veterans' services department shall collect a fee of five dollars (\$5.00) for the issuance of a duplicate certificate of eligibility to a veteran or to a veterans' organization.

G. A person who violates the provisions of this section by intentionally claiming and receiving the benefit of an exemption to which the person is not entitled or who fails to comply with the provisions of Subsection D of this section is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000). A county assessor or the assessor's employee who knowingly permits a claimant for an exemption to receive the benefit of an exemption to which the claimant is not entitled is guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) and shall also be automatically removed from office or dismissed from employment upon conviction under this subsection.

H. A veteran or the veteran's unmarried surviving spouse who became eligible to receive a property tax exemption due to the expansion of the class of eligible veterans resulting from approval by the electorate in November 2004 of an amendment to Article 8, Section 5 of the constitution of New Mexico shall apply at the time the veteran or the veteran's unmarried surviving spouse applies for the 2005 veteran exemption, to the county assessor of the county in

which the property of the veteran or the veteran's unmarried surviving spouse is located to have the veteran exemptions for the 2004 and 2005 property tax years applied to the 2005 taxable value of the property. The same form of documentation required for a veteran's property exemption for property tax year 2005 is required to be presented to the county assessor for property tax year 2004."

**SECTION 3. APPLICABILITY.**--The provisions of Section 1 of this act apply to taxable years beginning on or after January 1, 2012.