Illinois lets senior citizens defer up to $7,500 a year in property taxes

Cook County Treasurer's Office - 1/2/2026

Illinois offers senior citizens a property tax relief program that works like a loan. The Senior Citizens Real Estate Tax Deferral Program allows qualifying seniors to defer or postpone the payment of up to $7,500 a year in property taxes.

The loan is repaid to the state when the property is sold or within a year after the death of the participant or within 90 days after a homeowner no longer qualifies for the benefit. If you'd like to apply, now is the time. But act fast because March 1, 2026 is the last day to apply for the program and seek deferral for 2025 taxes that will be due in 2026.

Qualifying homeowners must:

- Be 65 or older by June 1, 2026.
- Have household income of $75,000 or less.
- Have owned and occupied the qualifying property for at least the last three years.

Surviving spouses of previously approved applicants who are 55 or older within six months of the taxpayer's death are eligible for the program.

Applicants must have fire or casualty insurance for the qualifying property and must not owe outstanding property taxes or special assessment fees.

To apply, log on to the Treasurer's website at cookcountytreasurer.com. Once there, click on the green box that says **Downloadable Forms**. Then scroll to the bottom and click on the **Deferral of Taxes for Senior Citizens** link.

Applications also are available at the Treasurer's Office in the County Building at 118 N. Clark St., Room 112, in Chicago. Applicants must submit copies, not originals, of required documents that include proof of birth date and home ownership.

By law, the state prohibits anyone from applying after the March 1 deadline. The state charges 3% interest per year payable upon the death of the taxpayer or when ownership of the home transfers to a different owner. Participants may choose to pay off the loan sooner.

Additional qualifications apply when a home is held in a trust. Visit cookcountytreasurer.com to learn more about those requirements.

If you qualify, Illinois pays the taxes deferred by program participants. The 3% interest rate charged for 2025 taxes due in 2026 is half the rate charged in previous years when the state charged 6% interest.

Additional changes increased the household income eligibility threshold to $75,000 from $65,000 and the amount able to be deferred to $7,500 from $5,000.