



RUSK COUNTY APPRAISAL DISTRICT

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For Immediate Release

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Rusk County Appraisal District Board of Directors accepts results from the homestead exemption audit Thursday October 20, 2022 during their regular meeting.

(Henderson, TX) — A recent audit found almost 124 cases of falsified or erroneous homestead exemptions on properties in Rusk County, saving schools, cities and other local governments \$479,000.

“So far, audits of Rusk County Appraisal District records have recovered almost \$700,000 for local entities”, Chief Appraiser Weldon Cook said.

The appraisal district’s Board of Directors accepted the results from the homestead exemption audit Thursday October 20, 2022 during their regular meeting.

The results of the audit were presented by Mr. William Burnett with the Linebarger Goggan Blair and Sampson law firm. His firm performed the audit of residential property accounts in Rusk County that had homestead exemptions, which removes part of a residential property’s value from taxation. That lowers how much the homeowner pays in property taxes.

“Of the 12,704 accounts with homestead exemptions, the audit removed 124 accounts”, Mr. William Burnett said. Of those removals, the audit discovered the homeowner had died in 56 cases, there were 30 cases in which the homeowner claimed exemptions at multiple properties, and there were 38 cases in which the owner didn’t live at the residence where the exemption was being claimed.

“Attorneys performing the audit have access to methods that county appraisal districts do not such as driver’s licenses and Social Security numbers to see if people have applied for homestead exemptions in multiple locations,” Chief Appraiser Weldon Cook said. “They can look at information out of state but we don’t have access to those resources.”

In most if not all cases, the property owner paid back taxes for each year that the exemption was unlawfully used plus interest fees.

The homestead exemption audit resulted in \$479,047 in revenue, with the largest savings being about \$145,500 to Henderson ISD, \$101,600 to Rusk County, \$43,100 to Kilgore ISD, \$34,700 to Tatum ISD, \$34,300 to Overton ISD and \$31,000 to West Rest CO Cisd.

“I am very pleased that we had less than 1% of the exemptions that they found out of 12,700 properties,” Chief Appraiser Weldon Cook said, noting that attorneys went into the audit thinking that between 1-2% of homestead exemptions would be falsified or erroneous or intentionally duplicated.