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NEWS RELEASE

HARRIS COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COURT APPROVES LARGER TAX EXEMPTION FOR SENIORS *Exemption Eliminates County Taxes On Homesteads Valued At \$200,000 Or Less*

Harris County Commissioners Court unanimously approved a proposal Tuesday to increase the county's senior property tax exemption, resulting in smaller tax bills for thousands of older or disabled homeowners and entirely eliminating county tax bills for many others.

Court members increased the tax exemption for residence homesteads for disabled or senior taxpayers to \$160,000 for tax year 2008 from \$156,240 in tax year 2007.

Because the exemption can be combined with the standard 20 percent homestead property tax exemption, disabled taxpayers and those with an over-65 exemption will pay no Harris County taxes on homesteads assessed at \$200,000 or less. The exemption also applies to Harris County Hospital District, Harris County Flood Control District and Port of Houston Authority tax bills.

By passing the increased exemption this week, Commissioners Court ensured that the new figures will be included in the "Residential Notices of Appraised Values" being mailed to property owners by the Harris County Appraisal District, beginning March 15.

Court members also approved paying \$395,000 in legal fees to a woman who sued the county several years ago to remove a Bible from a display case in front of the old Civil Courts Building in downtown Houston. The Bible was removed, but the case was ultimately appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, which declined to hear the county's appeal last year.