

Be informed: Election Day is Nov. 6, 2018



At recent board meetings, the Villages of Hazel Crest, Midlothian, Richton Park and Thornton voted to approve placing this nonbinding referendum on the Nov. 6 ballot:

“Should Cook County work to create and maintain a tax incentive program that results in lower property tax bills and reduces the tax burden on local property owners and taxpayers?”

Voters from Hazel Crest, Midlothian, Richton Park and Thornton will be asked to vote “Yes” or “No.”

Information & Frequently Asked Questions About the Referendum

Q: What is a nonbinding referendum?

A: This is a question included on a ballot during a village-wide election. A nonbinding — also known as advisory — referendum is often used to provide evidence of community support before projects are planned or actions are taken.

Q: What’s a tax incentive program?

A: The Cook County Board passed a tax incentive ordinance in 1976, then amended it over the years and by 1984 added language that defines various tax incentive classes including [6B](#), [7A](#), [7B](#), [7C](#), [8](#), [9](#), [C](#), [L](#), [S](#), and [others](#).

The Class 8 incentive, used frequently in the South Suburbs, is designed to encourage industrial and commercial development in areas of Cook County that are experiencing severe economic stagnation. This incentive assesses qualifying real estate at a reduced assessment level for a period of twelve years from the date that new construction or substantial rehabilitation is completed and initially reassessed or, in the case of abandoned property, from the date of substantial reoccupation. Class 8 assessment levels are ten percent (10%) of market value for ten years, fifteen percent (15%) in year eleven and twenty percent (20%) in year twelve. This constitutes a substantial reduction from the twenty-five percent (25%) that industrial and

commercial properties are commonly assessed

Q: Why should voters care about the above referendum?

A: In short, it involves potential reductions in the high property taxes paid by home and business owners, particularly in Bloom, Bremen, Calumet, Rich and Thornton Townships (Class 8 eligible areas). When businesses operate in these communities, they share the burden in paying the taxes needed to fund schools, water and transportation infrastructure, run police and fire departments, light streets, haul garbage and remove snow. However, in the absence of business investment, homeowners must bear much of the entire cost for these critical services, meaning higher tax bills.

Q: Why don’t more companies conduct business in the Chicago Southland?

A: There are several reasons, but mostly all involve high taxes.

The incentive program was meant to help attract business developers by giving them tax breaks (see the incentive program explanation above). But in March 2018, the Cook County Board of Commissioners ratified an amendment

to the Property Tax Incentive Program to require private developers to pay prevailing wages and benefits, and hire apprentices in order to take advantage of the property-tax incentive programs. An unintended consequence of the amendment has increased costs for construction which reduces private sector interest and the viability of the Tax Incentive program, or in other words a loss of business development/retention and jobs.

The results? Some companies threatened to move their businesses to Indiana or Will County where taxes are lower, leaving Chicago Southland homeowners with an ever increasing tax burden.

Q: How will the referendum question help?

A: Cook County can utilize parameters that create special categories or considerations in the Tax Incentive Program for the five townships that have struggled most to recover from the Great Recession. In addition, a comprehensive overhaul of the Incentive program is needed that simplifies the regulatory language and requirements that are now conflicting and unnecessarily burdensome,

creating barriers to program use. Supporting public entities that pay prevailing wages is great. However it is a mistake to impose prevailing wages upon private businesses and investors who seek incentive packages for economic growth in blighted communities. It undermines the spirit of public- private partnerships.



Key registration dates

- Tuesday, Oct. 9: Last day to register to vote by paper application
- Wednesday, Oct. 10: First day of grace period registration (an extension of the regular registration deadline, specific to registrar location)
- Sunday, Oct. 21: Last day to register to vote by online application

Registration questions

Find answers fast at:

cookcountyclerk.com/service/your-voter-information

This two-sided information sheet is a collaboration among SSMMA and the Villages of Hazel Crest, Midlothian, Richton Park and Thornton as an example of local government leveraging your investment in your communities.

