

STATE OF NEW YORK

6455

2019-2020 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

June 11, 2019

Introduced by Sen. SKOUFIS -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Rules

AN ACT providing for a partial real property tax exemption for the water filtration plant for the City of Newburgh, Orange County, New York

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. Legislative intent. The legislature finds as follows:

2 a. In 2014, potential contaminants, including Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl
3 Substances (PFAS) were detected in Lake Washington, the primary source
4 for the drinking water supply for the City of Newburgh in Orange County,
5 New York ("the City"). At the time, the level of contamination was at
6 170 ppt, below the 400 ppt limit then recommended by the U.S. Environ-
7 mental Protection Agency ("EPA"). When the EPA set a new level of 70 ppt
8 for short-term exposure in May 2016, the City manager declared an emer-
9 gency.

10 b. The source of contamination was determined to be PFOS- and
11 PFAS-containing firefighting foam used at Stewart Air National Guard
12 Base for training and emergency purposes. In August 2016, Stewart Air
13 National Guard Base was designated as a state Superfund site to hold the
14 U.S. Department of Defense responsible for full site clean-up.

15 c. New York State stepped in to assist with and fund the City's water
16 supply hookup to Brown's Pond and then to the Catskill Aqueduct for a
17 longer term, temporary water source. The State also constructed a granu-
18 lar activated carbon treatment facility ("GAC system") at the City's
19 water filtration plant to remove PFAS from the water in Washington Lake.
20 The GAC system became operational in 2018.

21 d. The City's water filtration plants and the GAC system are located
22 outside the municipal boundaries of the City in the towns of Newburgh
23 and New Windsor in Orange County. Both the county and the town of
24 Newburgh have exempted the City's water supply plants from real property
25 taxation. The City pays real property taxes annually to the town of New

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 Windsor, and to the Newburgh Enlarged City School District and the Corn-
2 wall Central School District.

3 e. Following the construction of the GAC system, the town of New Wind-
4 sor reassessed the value of the City's water filtration plant in light
5 of the constructed improvements. The reassessment resulted in a substan-
6 tial increase in the property tax value and, thus, in taxes. The taxes
7 for the Newburgh Enlarged City School District alone rose from
8 \$49,604.25 during the 2016-2017 tax assessment year to \$303,046.59
9 during the 2018-2019 tax assessment year, an increase of nearly
10 \$250,000.00.

11 f. The City has commenced tax certiorari proceedings in the Supreme
12 Court of the State of New York, County of Orange for the 2017-2018 and
13 2018-2019 tax assessment years bearing Orange County Index Nos.
14 EF005922-2017 and EF007932-2018. Due to the timing of the City's tax
15 certiorari proceedings, the City is required to produce a trial-ready
16 property appraisal in September 2019 and will have to undertake signif-
17 icant expense this summer to complete this appraisal if the tax relief
18 cannot be obtained by legislative action.

19 g. But for the PFAS contamination of the City's water supply, the
20 construction of the GAC system as an improvement to the City's water
21 filtration plant property would have been unnecessary. The construction
22 of the GAC system has resulted in unbudgeted and unforeseen costs and
23 expenses to the City through no fault of its own.

24 § 2. a. Notwithstanding the provisions of section 406 of the real
25 property tax law or any other law, rule or regulation, the City of
26 Newburgh shall be entitled to a partial exemption from real property
27 taxes imposed by the town of New Windsor, the Newburgh Enlarged City
28 School District and the Cornwall Central School District. Such exemption
29 shall be granted to the extent of the increase in the assessment of the
30 water filtration plant property attributable to the construction of the
31 GAC system.

32 b. As a condition of such exemption, the City shall withdraw and
33 discontinue all of its tax certiorari proceedings against the town of
34 New Windsor.

35 c. The town of New Windsor, the Newburgh Enlarged City School District
36 and the Cornwall Central School District shall make appropriate
37 corrections to the subject rolls, provide for the refund of those taxes
38 paid and cancel any taxes, fines, penalties, interest or tax liens
39 remaining unpaid.

40 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately.