



News Release

Cook County, Illinois

Second-Installment Property Tax Bills to be Mailed on Time for the First Time in 35 Years *Local Taxing Districts and Taxpayers Will Benefit*

CHICAGO -- June 6, 2012 -- Cook County elected officials announced Wednesday that 1.8 million second-installment property tax bills are expected to be mailed on time this year for the first time since 1977 – a move that will save municipalities and school districts millions of dollars.

Staff from county agencies met months ago to develop an accelerated schedule to restore timeliness and when tax bills are mailed this July, it will be the result of cooperation among the various county agencies.

The second-installment tax bill process involves several government agencies. The Assessor's Office, the Board of Review, the Illinois Department of Revenue and the Clerk's Office all must complete their parts in the process before the Treasurer's Office can mail the bills.

"For over 30 years the County has mailed second-installment bills late and it's been embarrassing, but today we're here to announce that this practice will end," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "The continued delay in getting the tax bills out on time has repeatedly hurt school districts, library districts, park districts, and taxpayers. This is another significant example of the collaborative work we've undertaken at Cook County and evidence that we continue to take positive steps forward."

Late bills have historically proven problematic for many taxing bodies that rely on property taxes for funding, said Cook County Assessor Joseph Berrios, whose office contributed to the timely mailing by completing the 2011 assessment sooner than any other assessment since the early 1980's.

"Many agencies have had to borrow money to maintain operations until they get their piece of the property tax pie," Berrios said. "This has become an expensive proposition for these taxing bodies during a down economy and has had a great impact on these agencies."

Late tax bills have also meant that taxpayers have had to budget for two tax bills being mailed and due so close together. The timely mailing of tax bills will help ensure that taxpayers have adequate time to budget and save for both installments.

After the Cook County Board of Review received the 2011 certified assessment from Berrios' office, they reviewed the assessment appeals submitted to their agency and completed their work early, also contributing to the timely bills.

"This is an important achievement for the Board of Review and Cook County," said Commissioner Larry R. Rogers, Jr. "One of the County's core functions is to maintain the property tax system to ensure that it supports our schools and funds the education of our children," Commissioner Rogers added.

“Schools, libraries and local governments directly benefit financially now we were able to right the property tax ship,” said Commissioner Michael M. Cabonargi, Chairman of the Board of Review. “Cook County and the Board of Review are doing more with less and bringing real value and service to Cook County taxpayers and residents.”

“Residents want consistency and clarity in the property tax system. Meeting the statutory requirement helps ensure that tax bills can be issued at the same time every year, unlike in prior years when a bill could be due in the summer, fall or around the holidays which disrupts household finances,” said Commissioner Dan Patlak.

Once the assessments are finalized, Cook County Clerk David Orr’s office calculates tax rates based on the tax levies submitted by taxing districts. Orr said that the timely mailing will potentially save local taxing districts an unprecedented amount of money.

“We’re pleased that taxing districts, like schools and municipalities, will get their money sooner. They will not have to stretch to borrow, or pay interest on such loans,” Orr said. “Saving money for the taxing districts ultimately helps their taxpayers.”

Once the whole process is complete, the Treasurer’s Office mails out the tax bills.

“I’ve always said that if my office gets the information early then we could mail the bills early,” Pappas said. “It is gratifying to work with the other offices to finally be able to meet the law.”

All county officials stressed that the return to the regular mailing schedule will not only have a positive impact on the numerous taxing agencies that rely on property taxes for funding, but that it will ultimately help every Cook County taxpayer.

“Getting the tax bills back on track and mailed on time is a win-win for everyone,” Berrios said.

Pappas noted that this would be the first county bill that would be part of an effort to give taxpayers information about where their payments go. Taxpayers can enter their Property Index Numbers on the county’s portal at cookcountypropertyinfo.com or the treasurer’s website at cookcountytreasurer.com to see how much each of the 12 to 20 taxing agencies listed on second-installment bills receives from their payments, along with comprehensive debt and other financial information on each taxing agency.

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