



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 19, 2022
Scott Smith, Chief Communications Officer
Cook County Assessor's Office
312-919-3213 / scott.smith@cookcountyil.gov

Assessor's Office Refunds \$15 Million To Cook County Neighborhoods
More than a thousand non-eligible persons' benefits removed

In figures released today, Cook County Assessor Fritz Kaegi announced the collection of more than \$15 million dollars over the past three years from people receiving tax exemptions for which they were not eligible. The office collected the funds from taxpayers who did not meet the state eligibility requirements and from estates of those who were recently deceased.

Of the \$5.1 million collected in 2021, \$3.5 million was refunded back to communities in Cook County to pay for services such as schools, parks, libraries, and first responders.

“As the Cook County Assessor, one of my most important jobs is to ensure property tax savings exemptions only go to those who qualify,” said Assessor Kaegi. “Since the beginning of my administration, our Erroneous Exemptions Investigations Department has done this work at no cost to Cook County taxpayers. The refunds they’ve collected contribute to lowering property taxes for residents and business owners.”

Automatic renewals of exemptions over the last two years helped ease the administrative burden on homeowners during the height of the pandemic. To ensure that only qualified households received property tax savings, the Erroneous Investigation Exemption (EEI) Department conducted extensive audits. As a result of these audits, the EEI department recovered more than \$1.4 million over the past three years, including more than 300 exemptions that would have otherwise been received on behalf of deceased individuals.

Since Assessor Kaegi took office in 2019, the Erroneous Exemptions Investigations department has operated at a surplus at no cost to Cook County taxpayers. The cost of salaries and investigations conducted by the department is paid through late fees and penalties charged to those who received exemptions for which they were not qualified. Common findings are households that no longer meet the income requirements or receive exemptions on dual properties. Any surplus funds are used to pay for the operations of the department in the following year.

Automatic renewal of exemptions will be granted again this year and the EEI department will continue its rigorous audits to ensure that only those who qualify continue to receive exemptions. In March and April, homeowners who may no longer qualify for exemptions will be mailed letters informing them that they must reapply. In the event that a homeowner discovers that they are no longer eligible, they can also fill out a [waiver form](#), removing the exemption. For more information, visit, cookcountyassessor.com/erroneous-exemptions.

###