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REVENUE DEPARTMENT OFFERS INFORMATION, ASSISTANCE TO PROPERTY OWNERS REGARDING ASSESSMENT NOTICES

(HELENA) – The Montana Department of Revenue has started mailing assessment notices to property owners statewide. The notices contain the new 2009 values of property and land that are the result of department reappraisals and action by the 2009 Montana Legislature.

The Department of Revenue says that property owners will be able to use the information to better understand any potential change in the amount of property taxes that they owe for 2009, as compared to past years.

“There has been much discussion and speculation about property reappraisal and its impacts in the past several months,” said Dan Bucks, director of the Montana Department of Revenue. “These property assessment notices provide Montana citizens and businesses with the facts for their properties.”

According to the department, the majority of Montana property owners will see only a slight change in the amount of property taxes that they owe.

“A majority of homeowners will see a 2009 tax change of only plus or minus forty dollars a year, which is plus or minus three and a half dollars a month,” said Bucks. “Of course, an individual property owner may have a greater or lesser change.”

Bucks also noted that the department changed its appraisal methods this cycle so that the 2009 assessed values for homes and business property will be more accurate--and frequently lower--than if it had used past methods.

Every property owner is asked to take a few minutes to review the information when it arrives in the mail. For most property owners, reviewing their property or land information should take no more than 15 minutes, and it can help ensure the property is taxed as accurately as possible

“We welcome hearing from property owners who have questions or concerns,” said Bucks. “Property owners are encouraged to call or visit their local Department of Revenue property assessment office using the office information printed on the assessment notice.”

Bucks said property owners also are encouraged to visit the department’s website at revenue.mt.gov. The website contains extensive information about how property is taxed, including a new calculator that allows a property owner to estimate his or her property taxes for each of the tax years 2009 - 2014, using information from the property assessment notice.

The Montana Constitution requires the State to appraise and equalize the value of all property for tax purposes. The Legislature has implemented this Constitutional mandate by requiring the Department of Revenue to complete a reappraisal of all residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural and forestland property over a six year period. Since 1972, under the guidance of the Constitution and the Legislature, the Department of Revenue has completed six statewide reappraisals.

The assessment notices will also implement the first complete update of agricultural land values in nearly 50 years.

With these assessment notices, the department is implementing House Bill 658, the 2009 Montana Legislature’s reappraisal bill. Governor Brian Schweitzer did not sign House Bill 658. Instead, he allowed the bill to become law without his signature because a reappraisal bill was necessary to prevent major increases in taxes for homeowners and small businesses. However, the Governor faulted the bill for expanding exemptions for bare land that subsidize the conversion of good farmland and green space to other uses.

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