

## **Commissioners Fund Property Tax Relief Fund**

### **\$1,000,000 set aside to provide help**

On July 1, 2022 a new state law took effect that allows individual counties to set up local property tax relief programs that mirror the state program administered by the State Treasurer.

The Converse County Commissioners jumped at this opportunity to offer meaningful property tax relief and started working with County Treasurer Joel Schell and County Assessor Dixie Huxtable to understand the program and who may qualify.

With the approval of the FY23 budget on July 19<sup>th</sup>, the Commissioners have allocated \$1,000,000 to qualifying county residents for property tax relief.

The state law requires the County to promulgate rules and set up an application process. Most of the parameters of the program are dictated by state law, and the Commissioners will be working on setting up the program in the coming months. Under the state law, no one will be able to apply for the program until around Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, but we hope to have the application ready before then so residents can be prepared to apply.

We know the significant increase in property values has caused a hardship for many Converse County residents. The basis for property tax has always been the market value, and despite no increase in the tax rate, tax bills have gone up. This is especially hard for those on a fixed income. The state law will allow qualified taxpayers to receive a refund of up to 50% of their tax bill.

It is important to note that only about 16% to 18% of your property tax bill goes to Converse County government. Most of your property tax bill goes to the school districts, with the balance of the revenue going to the six voter-approved special districts and the three municipalities. It is also very important to note that one of the state law requirements to qualify is that you pay your taxes “on time”. Whether you pay in installments in November and May or all at once in December, taxes must be paid on time to qualify.

The Commissioners are also hopeful the Legislature will offer additional opportunities for property tax relief. The unfunded “Homestead Exemption” may be the easiest path forward. The \$1,000,000 the Commissioners have allocated may be more than is needed today, but we want to be sure and have funds available for any new programs the legislature may enact.