

25101148D

HOUSE BILL NO. 2302

Offered January 13, 2025

Prefiled January 8, 2025

A *BILL to amend and reenact § 58.1-3606 of the Code of Virginia, relating to real property tax; exemption for religious buildings; rebuilding structure.*

Patron—Sickles

Referred to Committee on Finance

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 58.1-3606 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted as follows:

§ 58.1-3606. Property exempt from taxation by classification.

A. Pursuant to the authority granted in Article X, Section 6 (a)(6) of the Constitution of Virginia to exempt property from taxation by classification, the following classes of real and personal property shall be exempt from taxation:

1. Property owned directly or indirectly by the Commonwealth, or any political subdivision thereof.

2. *a.* Real property and personal property owned by churches or religious bodies, including (i) an incorporated church or religious body and (ii) a corporation mentioned in § 57-16.1, and exclusively occupied or used for religious worship or for the residence of the minister of any church or religious body, and such additional adjacent land reasonably necessary for the convenient use of any such property. Real property exclusively used for religious worship shall also include the following: (a) property used for outdoor worship activities; (b) property used for ancillary and accessory purposes as allowed under the local zoning ordinance, the dominant purpose of which is to support or augment the principal religious worship use; ~~and~~ (c) *property on which a new structure is being built to replace or rebuild a church or other building for religious worship, with the intention that such structure will be exclusively occupied or used for religious worship or for the residence of the minister of any church or religious body; and* (d) property used as required by federal, state, or local law.

b. For property exempt pursuant to clause (c) of subdivision a, the taxpayer shall be required to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the locality that (i) the property was exempt pursuant to clause (c) of subdivision a prior to the rebuilding or replacement of the structure; (ii) construction of the replacement or rebuilt structure will commence no later than six months after discontinuation of the former use of the property; (iii) the property will be used for no other purpose during the construction of such building; (iv) a reasonable timeline exists for completion of the structure and construction is proceeding at an appropriate pace; and (v) after completion, the property will be exclusively occupied or used for religious worship or for the residence of the minister of any church or religious body.

3. Nonprofit private or public burying grounds or cemeteries.

4. Property owned by public libraries, law libraries of local bar associations when the same are used or available for use by a state court or courts or the judge or judges thereof, medical libraries of local medical associations when the same are used or available for use by state health officials, incorporated colleges or other institutions of learning not conducted for profit. This paragraph shall apply only to property primarily used for literary, scientific or educational purposes or purposes incidental thereto and shall not apply to industrial schools which sell their products to other than their own employees or students.

5. Property belonging to and actually and exclusively occupied and used by the Young Men's Christian Associations and similar religious associations, including religious mission boards and associations, orphan or other asylums, reformatories, hospitals and nunneries, conducted not for profit but exclusively as charities (which shall include hospitals operated by nonstock corporations not organized or conducted for profit but which may charge persons able to pay in whole or in part for their care and treatment).

6. Parks or playgrounds held by trustees for the perpetual use of the general public.

7. Buildings with the land they actually occupy, and the furniture and furnishings therein belonging to any benevolent or charitable organization and used by it exclusively for lodge purposes or meeting rooms, together with such additional adjacent land as may be necessary for the convenient use of the buildings for such purposes.

8. Property of any nonprofit corporation organized to establish and maintain a museum.

B. Property, belonging in one of the classes listed in subsection A of this section, which was exempt from taxation on July 1, 1971, shall continue to be exempt from taxation under the rules of statutory construction applicable to exempt property prior to such date.