

Property Taxpayer Remedies

January 1, 2022

You are entitled to an explanation of the remedies available to you when you are not satisfied with the appraised value of your property. The Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts is required to publish an explanation of the remedies available to taxpayers and procedures to be followed in seeking remedial action. The Comptroller's office also must include advice on preparing and presenting a protest.

The Tax Code further directs that copies of this document be made readily available to taxpayers at no cost. The chief appraiser of an appraisal district may provide it with the *Notice of Appraised Value* mailed to property owners to explain the deadlines and procedures used in protesting the value of their property. The chief appraiser must provide another copy to property owners initiating protests.

The first step in exercising your rights under the Tax Code is to protest your property's appraised value. The following remedies only address appraised values and related matters. Government spending and taxation are not the subjects of this publication and must be addressed by local taxing units.

How to Protest Property Value

Appraisal districts must send required notices by May 1, or by April 1 if your property is a residential homestead, or as soon as practical thereafter. The notice must separate the appraised value of real and personal property.

The notice will also include the date and place the appraisal review board (ARB) will begin hearing protests and an explanation of the availability and purpose of an informal conference with the appraisal district to resolve your concerns before your ARB hearing. If you are dissatisfied with your appraised value or if errors exist in the appraisal records regarding your property, you should file a *Notice of Protest* with the ARB.

If an appraisal district has an Internet website, it must permit electronic filing of a protest for incorrect appraised value and/or unequal appraisal of property for which a residence homestead exemption has been granted, with certain exceptions. Counties with populations of 500,000 or more are required to do so and thus must have a website. Contact your local appraisal district for more details on filing a protest electronically.

What Can be Protested

The *Notice of Protest* may be filed using the model form on the Comptroller's website: comptroller.texas.gov/forms/50-132.pdf. The notice need not be on this form. Your notice of protest is sufficient if it identifies (1) the protesting person claiming an ownership interest in the property, (2) the property that is the subject of the protest and (3) dissatisfaction with a determination of the appraisal district.

You may request the ARB to schedule hearings on protests to be held consecutively concerning up to 20 designated properties on the same day. You may use a special notice on the Comptroller's website: comptroller.texas.gov/forms/50-131.pdf.

You may protest the value on your property in the following situations:

- the value the appraisal district placed on your property is too high and/or your property is unequally appraised;
- the appraisal district denied a special appraisal, such as open-space land, or incorrectly denied or modified your exemption application;
- the appraisal district failed to provide you with required notices; or
- other matters prescribed by Tax Code Section 41.41(a).

How to Complete the Protest Form

If using the protest form, these tips will help ensure that you can present your evidence and preserve your appeal rights.

- You should pay particular attention to the reason for protest section of the form.
- What you check as the reason for the protest influences the type of evidence you may present at your hearing.
- Your appeal options after the hearing are influenced by what you protest.

In the case of a typical residential property, checking incorrect appraised value and/or unequal appraisal will allow you to present the widest types of evidence and preserve your full appeal rights.

How to Resolve Concerns Informally

Appraisal districts will informally meet with you and try to resolve your objections prior to your ARB hearing. You must request the informal conference with the appraisal district on either your *Notice of Protest* form or in writing before your scheduled hearing date. It is very important, however, that you preserve your right to protest to the ARB by filing your *Notice of Protest* before the deadline, even if you expect to resolve

your concerns at the informal meeting with the appraisal district.

Ask one of the appraisal district's appraisers to explain how the district arrived at the value of your property. Be sure the property description is correct and that the measurements for your home or business and lot are accurate. Many appraisal districts have this information online.

What is an ARB?

The ARB is an independent, impartial group of citizens authorized to resolve disputes between taxpayers and the appraisal district. It is not controlled by the appraisal district. The local administrative district judge, or the judge's designee, appoints ARB members, including special panel ARB members to hear complex property protests.

The ARB must adopt and follow certain hearing procedures that may be unfamiliar to you. It must base its decisions on facts it hears from you and the appraisal district to decide whether the appraisal district has acted properly in determining the value of your property.

ARB members cannot discuss your case with anyone outside of the hearing. Protest hearings, however, are open to the public and anyone can sit in and listen to the case. A closed hearing is allowed on the joint motion of the property owner and chief appraiser if either intends to disclose proprietary or confidential information at the hearing.

When are Protests Filed?

You must file your *Notice of Protest* with the ARB no later than May 15 or 30 days after the appraisal district mailed the *Notice of Appraised Value*, whichever is later. You may request an evening or Saturday hearing. The ARB will notify you at least 15 days in advance of the date, time and place of your hearing. Under certain circumstances, you may be entitled to a postponement of the hearing to a later date. The ARB begins hearings around May 15 and generally completes them by July 20. Start and end dates can vary from appraisal district to appraisal district.

At least 14 days before your protest hearing, the appraisal district will mail a copy of this pamphlet; a copy of the adopted ARB procedures; and a statement that you may request a copy of the data, schedules, formulas and any other information the chief appraiser will introduce at your hearing.

You or your agent may appear at the ARB hearing in person, by telephone conference call, videoconference or by filing a written affidavit. To appear by telephone conference call or videoconference, you must provide written notice at least 10 days before the hearing, and any evidence must be submitted by written affidavit delivered to the ARB before the hearing begins. ARBs in counties with populations less than 100,000 that also lack the technological capabilities for videoconferences are not required to provide them.

If you fail to appear, you may lose the right to be heard by the ARB on the protest and the right to appeal. If you or your agent fails to appear at a hearing, you are entitled to a new hearing if you file with the ARB, not later than four days after your hearing date, a written statement showing good cause for failing to appear and request a new hearing. Good cause is defined as a reason that includes an error or mistake that was not intentional or was not the result of conscious indifference and will not cause undue delay or injury to the person authorized to extend the deadline or grant a rescheduling.

What Steps to Take to Prepare for Protest Hearing

You should consult with the appraisal district staff about your property's value. Ask questions about items you do not understand. The appraisal district is required to provide copies of documents that you request, at no charge via first class mail or electronically by agreement. Many appraisal districts provide a great deal of information on their websites at no charge.

If you are protesting the appraisal of your home or small business, you can view videos on the topic on the Comptroller's website at comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/.

Observing the following tips can also help in achieving a successful appeal:

- *Be on time and prepared for your hearing.* The ARB may place time limits on hearings.
- *Stick to the facts and avoid emotional pleas.* The ARB has no control over the appraisal district's operations or budget, tax rates for local taxing units, inflation or local politics; addressing these topics in your presentation wastes time and will not help your case.
- *Review the ARB hearing procedures.* After you receive the ARB hearing procedures, take time to become thoroughly familiar with them and be prepared to follow them.
- *Present your information in a simple and well-organized manner.* You and the appraisal district staff are required to exchange evidence at or before the hearing. Photographs and other documents are useful. You should take an appropriate number of copies so that each ARB member and the appraisal district representative receive one.

The date of your appraisal is Jan. 1, so you should make sure that changes made before that date are included in the appraisal. Improvements

or damage to your property after Jan. 1 should not be part of the appraisal or the protest.

If you are protesting the value of business property or other appraisal matters, you should have evidence to support your opinion of value. Sales data may not be available or relevant, but income and expense information may be useful.

Generally, the appraisal district has the burden of proof in value and unequal appraisal disputes. An appraiser's job is to appraise property at its market value, equitably and uniformly.

Limited Binding Arbitration

After you have filed a notice of protest and if you believe your ARB or chief appraiser failed to comply with a procedural requirement relating to your protest, you may file a request for limited binding arbitration (LBA) to compel the ARB or chief appraiser to comply with certain procedural requirements.

To request LBA, you must file a Request for Limited Binding Arbitration. Additional information about filing a LBA request, including filing deadlines and fees, can be found on the Comptroller's website at comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/.

What if you are Dissatisfied with the ARB's Decision

After the ARB rules on your protest, it will send a written order by certified mail. In counties with a population of 120,000 or more, you or your agent can request to receive order of determination by email. If you are dissatisfied with the order of determination, there are three options to appeal. Any ARB decision can be appealed to the state district court in the county in which the property is located. Depending on the facts and the type of property, you may be able to appeal to the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) or to binding arbitration.

Additional information about appealing an ARB decision, including filing deadlines and fees, can be found on the Comptroller's website at comptroller.texas.gov/property-tax/protests/.

In all types of appeals you are required to pay a specified portion of your taxes before the delinquency date.

What is the Comptroller's role in the protest process?

The Comptroller's office provides a survey for property owners to offer feedback on the ARB experience, that may be submitted by mail or electronically. The online survey is available in English at surveymonkey.com/tr/surveyarb and in Spanish at surveymonkey.com/tr/Spanishsurveyarb. Survey results are published in an annual report. The Comptroller's office does not, however, have oversight responsibility over the ARB and has no authority to investigate complaints about the ARB. Any complaints about the ARB or its members should be directed to the ARB itself, the taxpayer liaison officer or

the local administrative district judge. The Comptroller's office has no direct involvement in the protest process.

Further, this pamphlet is intended to provide customer assistance to taxpayers. It does not address all aspects of property tax law or the appraisal process. The Comptroller's office is not offering legal advice, and this information neither constitutes nor serves as a substitute for legal advice. Questions regarding the meaning or interpretation of statutes, notice requirements and other matters should be directed to an attorney or other appropriate counsel.

Where can you get more information?

This publication does not cover all aspects of the ARB protest process or property taxes. For more information, please see the following Web resources:

- *Appraisal Protests and Appeals;*
- *Appraisal Review Board Manual;*
- *Paying Your Taxes;*
- *Property Tax System Basics;*
- *Taxpayer Bill of Rights;*
- *Texas Property Tax Code;* and
- *Valuing Property.*

This information is found on the Comptroller's Property Tax Assistance website. It provides property owners a wealth of information on the appraisal and protest process at comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/. For specific inquiries, you must contact the appraisal district where your property is located.

Property Tax Assistance Division
Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts Publication
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For additional copies visit our website:
comptroller.texas.gov/taxes/property-tax/

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800-252-5555.