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# Real Estate Legal Update

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## (US) It's tax appeal season in Pennsylvania: 2015 Real Property Assessment Appeal Deadlines Are On The Horizon



*By Dusty Elias Kirk on 17 June 2014*

*Posted in Real Estate (U.S.)*

*This post was written by Dusty Elias Kirk and Peter Schnore*

Pennsylvania real property tax appeal “season” is upon us once again. It’s important that a property owner not take an assessment at face value.

For 66 of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties, the 2015 real property tax appeal deadlines fall between August 1 and the first Monday of October 2014. The current annual deadlines are as follows:

- **August 1:** Bucks, Cambria, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Erie, Fayette, Franklin, Indiana, Lancaster, Lawrence, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton and York
- **August 15:** Berks
- **August 31:** Wyoming and Butler
- **September 1:** Adams, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Blair, Bradford, Cameron, Carbon, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Columbia, Crawford, Cumberland, Elk, Forest, Fulton, Greene, Huntingdon, Jefferson, Juniata, Lackawanna, Lebanon, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Pike, Potter, Schuylkill, Snyder, Somerset, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Venango, Warren, Washington, Wayne and Westmoreland
- **October 6:** Philadelphia
- **March 31, 2015:** Allegheny

Nearly all of the counties above may move their appeal dates up to as early as August 1 ***with as little as two weeks’ notice*** via publication in a local newspaper. We will continue to monitor changes in appeal deadlines.

Labor Day falls on September 1 this year. Because of this, the September 1 appeal deadline is extended to September 2. Nonetheless, we recommend filing any appeal in such a county before the Labor Day weekend to avoid problems arising from delays in mail delivery.

### **STEB to Release the New Common Level Ratios July 1**

By July 1 of every year, the Pennsylvania State Tax Equalization Board must publish the latest Common Level Ratio figures for each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties.

Pennsylvania law contemplates that the county's Common Level Ratio is to be applied to a property's assessment to determine the alleged current market value. Common Level Ratios vary widely because most Pennsylvania counties do not regularly reassess.

Here is an example: The Common Level Ratio published last year for Beaver County was 31.5 percent. If a property in that county has an assessment of \$1 million, its fair market value based upon the Common Level Ratio is \$3,174,600. If the real estate is worth less than that amount, the property owner should consider filing a real estate tax assessment appeal. This example shows why it is important not to take a property's assessment at face value.

Because of the short period of time between when the Common Level Ratios are released and the appeal deadlines, property owners have a narrow window of time to analyze the fair market values being applied to their properties using the applicable Common Level Ratio.

Reed Smith's Real Estate Practice Group in Pennsylvania is well prepared to assist property owners and tenants who are responsible for paying real estate taxes with this evaluation. Often tax assessment appeals can be handled on a contingency fee basis calculated upon the taxes saved as a result of the appeal, which is an effective way to budget and pay for this work. Any individual or business with an interest in commercial real estate may be interested in discussing the prospects of an appeal with us.

Please contact us if you have questions regarding the appeal deadlines or the evaluation of an assessment.