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THE CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 25, 2003

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**FINANCE ANNOUNCES CAMPAIGN TO HELP HOMEOWNERS TAKE
ADVANTAGE OF PROPERTY TAX SAVINGS PROGRAM**

**New Yorkers Receiving School Tax Relief (STAR) Exemption
Won't Pay the Absentee Landlord Property Tax Surcharge**

Finance Commissioner Martha E. Stark today announced a campaign to enroll homeowners in the State-funded School Tax Relief, or STAR, property tax exemption, which reduces the average homeowner's property tax bill by about \$185 per year. It is particularly important that eligible homeowners sign up for STAR now because enrollment in this modest tax reduction program is the easiest way to avoid paying the Absentee Landlord Surcharge, which may be billed later this year.

"Despite frequent mailings over the years, tens of thousands of homeowners who are eligible for the STAR exemption have not signed up," Commissioner Stark said. "We're on a mission to enroll every eligible New Yorker so they can start saving money and avoid the property tax surcharge."

Enrollment in STAR will ensure that homeowners will not have to pay the Absentee Landlord Surcharge, which is only intended for non-owner-occupied Class 1 properties that are used for investment purposes. Class 1 properties are 1-, 2- and 3-family houses and other small, mixed-use properties that include a residence.

Finance's STAR enrollment campaign, which began in August, will include:

- Mailing personalized STAR applications to 235,000 homeowners who may be eligible (August 2003);
- Working with members of the City Council on a re-mailing to homeowners who have not filled out an application (October 2003);

- Conducting outreach meetings with Council Members and other elected officials, including Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz and Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, to enroll people in STAR and disseminate applications for exclusion from the Absentee Landlord Surcharge (Oct-Nov 2003);
- Unveiling an online STAR application on our website (October 2003); and
- Developing advertising, with particular focus on the ethnic press (Oct-Nov 2003).

Every homeowner is eligible to receive a STAR exemption for his or her primary residence, as long as a simple application form is filled out correctly and filed with the Finance Department. Homeowners who enroll in STAR now will receive their exemption benefit on their July 2004 tax.

There are two types of STAR benefits -- "Basic" STAR and "Enhanced STAR." All homeowners are eligible to receive "Basic" STAR on their primary residence, regardless of age or income. Eligible seniors (older than 65) with an annual household income less than \$63,750 are entitled to receive a larger, "Enhanced" tax break.

Finance may bill the surcharge later this year to all owners of non-owner-occupied residences (i.e. investment properties) except those owners who submit an application to Finance asserting that these homes are: occupied by either a parent or child; vacant; or do not produce income (i.e. rent). Finance will begin disseminating these simple applications as well. These owners, like those enrolled in STAR, will not be billed the surcharge.

Homeowners who are unsure whether they currently receive the STAR exemption should visit the Finance website at www.nyc.gov/finance, pass the mouse over "Real Estate Tax," select "Assessment Roll" from the drop-down menu, and type in their address or property identification number, known as the Borough, Block and Lot, or BBL. A copy of the owner's July 2003 tax bill will appear on the screen and will show whether the owner currently receives a STAR exemption.

Those without Internet access can check the front of their July 2003 property tax bill.

Or, homeowners can call 311, New York City's information line.

"I urge homeowners who don't have STAR to sign up as soon as possible," Commissioner Stark said. "No one should pay more tax than they have to."