

President's Report - June, 2017

Overview

As we approach our 80th anniversary, CoCoTax continues to vigorously advocate for taxpayers throughout our county and beyond, advancing our mission to promote **good government at affordable cost**. Working with the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and other advocacy groups, we find ourselves in a “target rich environment” these days. Examples follow:

West County

Member Ben Steinberg and I presented a formal demand letter to the West Contra Costa (WCCUSD) school board, which was co-signed by a dozen elected officials and other concerned citizens. Following up on our monitoring of the school bond forensic audit, which affirmed whistleblower allegations of rampant waste and fraud, we want the board to seek recovery of some of the \$100 million paid to SGI, the bond construction management firm. We also want the board to complete the audit, which was inhibited by SGIs refusal to provide access to project documents, a clear breach of contract. The board has 30 days to respond.

We continue to monitor the shaky financial practices of the city of Richmond. I plan to ask for volunteers at tonight's West County chapter meeting to form a task force. Richmond is once again on the brink of insolvency, and city leaders are not taking the steps necessary to control spending. We will be working with the apartment owners' association and other groups in this effort. Many thanks to Sue Pricco for her leadership of the West County chapter.

East County

Our involvement in the fiscal issues with the East Contra Costa Fire Protection District continues. Members Hal Bray and Bryan Scott, co-founders of East County Citizens for Equal Protection (ECV) are working with Senator Glazer and Assemblyman Frazier on legislative remedies for the gross misallocation of property taxes, which is the root of the district's financial problems.

Hal will be organizing a new East County chapter in the coming months. In addition to the fire district's issues, there are many other local matters that require attention. I commend Hal for his work there.

Citizen Bond Oversight

CoCoTax members now serve on a number of Prop 39 oversight committees throughout the county, with hundreds of millions of bond money in play. This is one of our most critical functions, as taxpayers are on the hook for repaying the principal and long-term interest associated with the bonds. I have once again joined the board of directors of the California League of Bond Oversight Committees, and we will coordinate CoCoTax and CaLBOC strategy and work projects. CoCoTax member Anton Jungherr, co-founder of CaLBOC, continues to

serve along with member Denise Gianni on the WCCUSD CBOC, and has offered to provide comprehensive training to our CBOC representatives and all CBOC members.

Currently, we need CoCoTax members to serve on a number of CBOC's in central, east and west county areas. Please contact me if you have interest. CBOC duty is rewarding and vitally important to our schools and communities.

Pensions

*It is now clear that the state and almost every public agency is challenged by grossly under-funded pension plans. CalPensions estimates that the state-wide total probably exceeds **\$1 trillion. That equates to about \$100,000 for every California household.** CoCoTax has formed a Pensions Task Force, which has developed templates for evaluating agencies' current status and has prepared a list of possible solutions that we will be presenting to local jurisdictions. We are already meeting with Walnut Creek officials, and will focus on the cities of Brentwood and Hercules as well. It's time to stop talking about the pension problem and take corrective action.*

Virtually every new tax proposal appearing on ballots state-wide is at least partially motivated by the pension gap. A number of cities have declared municipal bankruptcy, and their ability to provide essential services, their long-term solvency and the security of public retirees is at serious risk.

Membership

We are resource-limited in dealing with the flood of taxpayers' issues with which we're confronted. Please reach out to your friends and associates and encourage them to attend one of our monthly board meetings and join CoCoTax.

CoCoTax makes a difference.

Jack Weir, President and Executive Director

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