



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**On “Tax Day” Local Government, Public Safety Leaders Announce
they Will Submit Over One Million Signatures Friday to Help Keep
Local Tax Dollars Local**

***Coalition confident signatures will help restore voter control over local tax dollars
by qualifying the Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act for the
November ballot***

Sacramento, CA – The coalition in support of the Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act announced today, as millions of Americans file their federal and state income taxes, that the group will submit more than one million signatures to county elections offices on Friday to qualify the Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act for the November 2004 ballot. The measure would require voter approval before the state could take and use local government funds in the future. In doing so, proponents said the measure would restore voter control over local tax dollars that fund essential local government services like law enforcement, fire protection, emergency health care, parks, libraries and transportation.

“What better day than April 15th to announce that we have met our mark and will be submitting signatures to qualify this important initiative for the November ballot?” asked Ron Loveridge, Mayor of Riverside and President of the League of California Cities. “As California voters file their tax returns today, they can take some comfort in knowing we are one step closer to keeping more of their local tax dollars at home.”

The initiative is jointly sponsored by the League of California Cities, the California State Association of Counties, and the California Special Districts Association and supported by numerous public safety and community organizations.

“For the past two months, we have been asking voters to sign the blue petition to give voters, not Sacramento politicians, more control over their local tax dollars,” said Paul Stein, Calaveras County Supervisor and President of the California State Association of Counties. “Voters responded enthusiastically to this call-to-action. More than one million voters said ‘enough is enough’ – it is time to change the system and keep local dollars where they belong.”

Supporters point out that the state has taken more than \$40 billion in local property taxes over the past decade from local governments to fund obligations of the state. State legislators have continued to take a growing portion of local revenues in times of both budget surpluses and budget deficits -- forcing local governments to either raise local fees or taxes to maintain services, or cut back on critically needed services. This measure would help prevent that from happening in the future by requiring a statewide vote of the people before the legislature could reduce local revenues. It would also require more timely reimbursements from the State whenever it mandates a program, service or added cost onto local governments. **(More)**

Paid for By Californians to Protect Local Taxpayers and Public Safety, Sponsored by a coalition of local government organizations, League of California Cities (non-public funds account), California State Association of Counties (non-public funds account) and the California Special Districts Association (non-public funds account)

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“The submission of these signatures puts us one step closer to protecting our local services,” said Bill Miller, General Manager North of the River Municipal Water District and President of the California Special Districts Association. “We are prepared to wage an aggressive campaign between now and November to educate the voters about this initiative. We are confident that, come Election Day, the majority of California voters will vote ‘Yes’ to protect local services and keep more of their local tax dollars at home.”

Public safety leaders are also strong backers of the Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act. The California Professional Firefighters, California Police Chiefs Association, California Fire Chiefs Association, Peace Officers Research Association of California, Fire Districts Association of California and many more public safety representatives and organizations have been actively engaged in signature gathering efforts.

“For too long, Sacramento has been stealing local dollars and ignoring the impact these thefts have on public safety,” said Dan Terry, President of California Professional Firefighters. “We think voters clearly understand that the best way to protect vital fire and law enforcement services is to keep our local tax dollars in local hands.”

Specifically, the 2004 Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act:

- Requires voter approval before the Legislature can reduce local government revenues or take them for state, rather than local, purposes.
- Ensures that local tax dollars are available to fund local services like police and fire, emergency and trauma care, parks, roads, libraries and water delivery.
- Makes it absolutely clear that if the State Legislature mandates that local governments provide new or expanded programs or services, then the State would have to reimburse local governments for the cost of those programs.
- Provides flexibility for state budgeting decisions, but requires voter-approval on any future State Legislative actions that would reduce funding for essential local services.

What the measure DOES NOT do:

- Does not raise taxes. In fact, this measure will help decrease pressures for local fees and taxes by protecting local revenue sources from State raids.
- Does not increase funding to local governments. Simply prevents the State Legislature from raiding future local government funding.
- Does not reduce funding that schools receive from local property taxes or funding that schools receive from the State.
- Does not reduce funding for other state programs like schools or highways.
- Does not prevent future reform of the state-local fiscal relationship.

Coalition members have been gathering signatures since early February and on Friday will submit more than one million signatures to county elections officials. The coalition needs 598,105 valid signatures to qualify for the November ballot. Official initiative qualification is expected from the Secretary of State in June.