

DON'T IGNORE THE FACTS ON PROP L

By Ken Perry

Voters often lament that today's political campaigns rely too much on vitriolic scare tactics and provide too few basic facts for them to make informed decisions. In the case of Proposition L, which is on San Francisco's November ballot, opponents of the measure can easily fulfill voter wishes.

Prop L proposes to double the transfer tax on residential and commercial property sales of \$1 million or more in San Francisco. When voters cast their ballots, it might help them to know the following facts:

- 100 percent — The amount by which the Board of Supervisors wants to increase the real property transfer tax, which leads to the next item.
- 1st — Where San Francisco will rank among the 37 California cities that charge such a tax if Proposition L passes.
- \$0 — The amount of Proposition L revenue earmarked for new programs or to be appropriated for vital City services. Prop L is a general tax and, as such, Board members will be free to spend the proceeds any way they please.
- 1 — The number of days it took the Board to think of Prop L after unsuccessfully trying to impose new taxes on gross receipts and payroll expenses, which would have freed its members from the responsibility of dealing effectively with recent revenue shortfalls, i.e., reign in City expenditures.
- 30 — The number of minutes before the filing deadline that Supervisors Tom Ammiano, Matt Gonzalez, Aaron Peskin and Sophie Maxwell placed a hastily drafted Prop L on the November ballot.
- 0 — The number of public hearings the Board held on Prop L before placing it on the ballot, thereby bypassing the opportunity to have City taxpayers tell the Board perhaps it should focus on other matters, such as trimming the City budget.

Voters might also want to note some other statistics when completing their ballot. In this instance, the numbers point to a greater problem, which Prop L portends to exacerbate.

- \$100 million — The amount of bond funds the San Francisco School District is accused of misappropriating, according to a recent San Francisco Chronicle series.
- \$18 million — The amount of affordable housing funds the San Francisco Housing Authority can't find, according to a City audit.
- \$46 million — The amount paid last year to 630 "special assistants" employed by City government.

In the past five years, San Francisco's per capita spending has grown 29 percent, with the total number of City employees increasing 18 percent to approximately 28,000 municipal workers. It's absurd to offset a massive increase in City spending and the fallout from a series of management mishaps by doubling taxes on San Franciscans' home equity and a recession-ravaged commercial real estate market. This is doubly true when the tax increase isn't earmarked or restricted to providing any new service or saving any existing one.

John Adams once said, "Facts are a stubborn thing," meaning they are there for everyone to see and therefore should not be ignored. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors should take heed and look hard at misspending and waste within City government. Unfortunately, in the form of Prop L, it seeks to place the resulting burden of paying for a bloated City bureaucracy squarely on local residents, private-sector businesses and their employees, all of whom in their own right are struggling to cope with deep budgetary cuts in the Bay Area's private sector.

The facts speak for themselves: San Franciscans should vote no on Proposition L.

###

Ken Perry is the President of the Building Owners and Managers Association of San Francisco, an organization providing workspace for 5,775 businesses and more than 240,000 employees in San Francisco, Marin, Sonoma and San Mateo counties.

Word Count: 632 (Including headline, byline and tagline)