

Home Seizures for “Economic Development” Must Stop by Jon Coupal, President, Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association

As homeowners, we fear two things from government. Our first fear is that we will be taxed out of our homes by politicians who think we are rich simply because we own property – no matter how modest. This is why voters overwhelmingly passed Proposition 13 in 1978. While property taxes continue to be a burden, now they are limited and predictable.

This brings us to the other fear we have of government; that our homes or property will be seized and turned over to another private individual or interest willing to pay more in taxes. (Yes, for politicians and bureaucrats, it really is about getting our money.) Most of us have accepted the traditional interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, that government has the right to use eminent domain to take property for a public use like a road or a fire station as long as compensation is paid to the property owner.

However, a 2005 Supreme Court ruling opened the door to local governments taking property so that it can be used for private development as long as government can show there is a community “benefit” like increased tax revenue.

In California communities like Baldwin Park, efforts are underway to take hundreds of home. In Lynwood, officials wanted to seize over 1,000 homes if they could strike a deal with the National Football League to build a stadium.

While these are dramatic examples, the fact is that homes and small businesses are condemned almost daily around our state for the private profit of others.

To protect your property against unwarranted seizure, a coalition of property rights groups and the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association and AOA have authored the California Property Owners & Farmland Protection Act (CPOFPA) that will appear on the June ballot as Prop 98.

For more information, please go to www.aoausa.com/govabuse.