

City of San Francisco Dumps More Tax on Apartment Owners!

by Marc Wilson

I was just paying some bills and I could not help but to notice a disturbing trend. I have one bill from the San Francisco Fire Department for \$146 – it's called the Residential Apartment/Hotel Inspection Fee. The bill says that Lieutenant Vincent Perez completed a fire and life safety inspection at one of my apartment buildings. The bill does include a copy of the inspection, an indication as to the date and time of the inspection or any other specific information concerning the inspection.

Have you ever received one of these bills? Is this some kind of joke? Wait...it gets better. The next day, I get a bill from the Department of Public Health. Apparently, I owe the Department of Public Health \$70 so that I can participate in their newly formed Vector Control Program. What in the world is a vector? Do I have any vectors? How does one control a vector? I ask you again, is this some kind of joke?

You had better believe that this is some kind of joke and the joke is on you! You are a fat sitting duck and the San Francisco Fire Department and the Department of Public Health wants to skin you alive. These bureaucrats have morphed into money-eating monsters and they don't care who they kill and they don't care who they eat.

The sad truth is there is absolutely no appreciation; no gratitude in my heart for any city employee who gets paid five times what they are worth. Did you know that 800 San Francisco firefighters make more than \$100,000 per year? I get these bills from the Fire Department and I want to be sick. I give more than 50% of my income (including property tax) to the government and I have to read about 45 year-old firefighters retiring with 90% pay and health benefits for the rest of their natural lives and I want to be sick. Do you think these people care about you? Sure, the same way a parasite cares for its host. Its dangerous work you say ... give me a break. Listen to me, I am not kidding, more realtors have died in the line of duty in San Francisco than firefighters.

Normally, a grotesquely obese and mindless bureaucracy will at least put some lipstick on their new real estate tax scheme. Where is the inspection report? What date was the inspection performed? Where's the love and romance? No such luck. All I get is "*We drove by your property, now send us the money...or else*". What are these firefighters doing during their inspection (and I use that word very loosely) that the Department of Building Inspection is not doing in their inspection? Again, nothing! Let's see – check fire alarm panel, check expiration dates on fire extinguishers, check maintenance certificates on fire escape ladders, check ingress and egress for fire equipment...am I missing anything? I don't think so. This is not an inspection fee – it's a real estate tax. It says right on the bill that if you don't pay, the City will lien your property. And that, my friends, is the very definition of a real estate tax!

I don't want to single out the firefighters. The realty is that our entire city government is engaged in a journey of self-absorption and personal enrichment that is unparalleled in a modern democracy. The Department of Public Health is not better or worse than the Fire

Department. I don't really blame government employees for gorging themselves at the public trough. They are enabled by the average San Francisco voter. The San Francisco voter is to blame. Where oh where is the outrage? A vector, by the way, is defined as *an organism (such as a fly or tick) that transmits a pathogen*. So, now we have a Vector Control Program, compliments of the Department of Public Health. This is positively rich ... you just can't make this stuff up.

If you don't laugh, you'll cry. Again, there is absolutely nothing contained within a Vector Control Program inspection that is not part of a standard D.B.I. inspection. I can only imagine the meeting in which they came up with the term Vector Control Program. "*Let's see ... what can we name this new real estate tax so that it no longer looks like a real estate tax, so that it no longer smells so bad? I've got it...the Vector Control Program*". I've got news for you; if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it's a duck. This is a real estate tax, plain and simple.

What's the good news? The good news is that the City and the State are finally bankrupt. The music has stopped and the fat lady is singing and isn't it beautiful? It is my heartfelt and sincere hope that San Francisco, California and other similarly dysfunctional municipalities will declare bankruptcy over the next couple of years. Only then can the madness truly end. Only then will the trough be emptied, the employment contracts shredded and financial order restored. And you know what? We might be on our way. Earlier, I asked, "Where is the outrage?" I think we might finally have some.

I read how the citizens of the great state of California had the courage to give Governor Schwarzenegger's state propositions 1A through 1E the classic Bronx cheer. Well done – that's a good start.

Another good idea...why not challenge the Vector fee and the fire inspection fee for the sadly transparent breaches of Proposition 13 that they are? Do you remember Prop 13 – the People's initiative to limit property taxation? Aside from limiting property tax increases, this ditty of a law requires a two-third's majority vote in local elections for governments wishing to raise special taxes. These people aren't stupid ... they have selected a fee schedule that will reduce the risk of legal action by property owners. They have asked themselves, "*What can we get away with?*" These fees are obviously real estate taxes and they should be vigorously challenged in court. One way or the other, whatever happens with this mess, we have no one to blame but ourselves.

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