

Marin United Taxpayers Association

TAX NEWS

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THE MUTA BOARD: Don Erbel, President; Fielding Greaves, VP; Michael Hartnett, Treasurer;
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THE REAL MUTA

President's Message The hottest issue you are seeing in the news is a focus on state and local government. It is outrage at how government resources are used. **Marin United Taxpayers Association** (MUTA) was founded on January 1, 1977 to focus on tax issues and then in 1978 to support Proposition 13. Now we're addressing *tax collection* and *tax use* (e.g., employee salaries and pensions). See **FOIA – Freedom of Information Act** below for details on what we're doing for you.

Good news! We are seeing positive movement to control taxation and spending. MUTA members *can* help to keep up the momentum by attending government board meetings, writing articles for the MUTA newsletter or local papers, analyzing issues and discussing them with your friends. These efforts monitor our hydra-headed government. Finally if you share your findings with us in some way (letters, e-mail, fax telephone, in-person), we can share them with all the members.

MUTA's take on the upcoming election Considering your survey opinions, here are MUTA's recommendations for the November 2 election. A Press Release was sent to local papers in late September. [Note: MUTA does not make candidate recommendations.]

MUTA State Recommendations

Prop. 18	Water Bonds	(withdrawn)	Prop. 23	Suspend AB32	Yes
Prop. 19	Marijuana	No	Prop. 24	Business Fees	No
Prop. 20	Redistricting	Yes	Prop. 25	Budget Majority	No
Prop. 21	Park Fees	No	Prop. 26	2/3rds Req.	Yes
Prop. 22	Transportation	Yes	Prop. 27	Redistricting	No

MUTA Local Recommendations

(Countywide measures and selected other local issues)

Meas. B	\$10 Vehicle Lic. Fee	No	Meas. I	San Rafael Paramedic Tax	No
Meas. F	Novato Sales Tax	No	Meas. S	MMWD Board Desal Proposal	No
Meas. H	San Anselmo Paramedic Tax	No	Meas. T	Citizen MMWD Desal Proposal	Yes

Understand the issues. Decide on them. Then, cast a well-considered vote!

Membership survey The August Tax News included a “ballot” for state and local issues along with a survey return envelope. Here are the results.

Prop.		Yes (%)	No (%)	Prop.		Yes (%)	No (%)
18	Water Bonds	83	17	23	Suspend AB32	82	18
19	Marijuana	54	46	24	Business Fees	12	88
20	Redistricting	93	7	25	Budget Majority Vote	9	91
21	Park Fees	24	76	26	2/3rds Requirement	100	0
22	Transportation	81	19	27	Redistricting	23	77

Note: Prop. 18 was withdrawn. Prop. 26 & 27 results were estimated because Prop 26 was accidentally left out, but many respondent’s clearly indicated their intent with comments.

County-wide issue results are shown as a Percent Yes/No. Measure B \$10 Vehicle tax) – 8/92; Measure S (MMWD initiative) – 6/94; Measure T (citizen initiative) – 87/13. The remaining issues (paramedic taxes, sales taxes, fire taxes, etc.) were heavily slanted to “NO”.

FOIA – Freedom of Information Act MUTA is now using this tool to obtain information on how local government entities are spending your tax and fee money they collect. We have received some replies already and others have notified us they will be coming soon. As we know more, we will inform you on the MUTA website (www.marintaxpayers.org) and an upcoming Tax News newsletter. Get ready to learn some important spending facts!

Here is a review of BOS history Pensiongate: 1970’s SCAM to 2010 DISASTER

(Excerpts from MUTA’s TAX NEWS of Sep-Oct 1978 show the SCAM perpetrated by the Marin BOS.)

Mar 1976: Pension plan introduced at Marin request in SB1993 & AB384.

31 Aug 76: Marin Administrator in Sacramento lobbying for pension plan.

29 Sep 76: Gov. Brown vetoes SB1993, cites “reservations about wholesale withdrawal from Social Security.”

Mar 77: New “plan” (without actuarial report required by law) introduced in Marin County.

Apr 77: BOS signs agreement with Local 535 & MAPE: employee election results binding.

3-5 May 77: Employee election vote was NO to dropping Social Security.

May-mid-June 77: Intense BOS pressure on unions for revote. Two Grand Jury reports say county administration efforts “bordered on fraud.”

13-16 Jun 77: Employees re-vote, opt to drop Social Security.

I July 77: New “plan” adopted by BOS 3-2 vote, Rice and Roumiguere opposed. “Plan” reportedly illegal, because second “plan” never had actuarial report as required by law.

Move forward to today to see the DISASTER: The *Marin I/J* Oct 24, 2010 reports that a study by Stanford Social Policy Professor and former Marin assemblyman Joe Nation has found that Marin’s pension and retiree health benefits unfunded liability is now more than \$1.8 billion, over double the \$700 million estimated by the County.

Which brings us to this: Who were the 3 BOS votes that gave us this stinking “plan”? Who else but the three Bs – **Brown** (Hal), **Baptiste** (Arnold), and **Boxer** (Barbara), the one-time bad check Poster Girl in the House for her 146 bad checks!

The question: What will the supervisor’s do to fix this disaster?

The answer: See the next page to see how they are using their time.

Plastic Bag Mischief. What are the Marin Board of Supervisors (BOS) doing *for* you? The move to force everyone to BYOB (Bring Your Own Bag) and discontinue paper and plastic bags is an example. What does this mean to you? First, you are paying for all bags because the merchant passes the cost on to you. Second, why is the BOS helping merchants raise your costs? Why is the BOS actively working to raise your expenses and neglecting the salary and pension crisis that faces them and will cost you a lot? This happens everywhere in government – get elected, promise things you never intend to do, promote politically correct issues, claim major success then take a fat salary and a good pension. Is this what a “public servant” should do? When will this bad behavior stop!

More Mischief, Marin Energy Authority (MEA, or Marin Clean Energy, MCE). We covered MEA extensively at the MUTA meeting in February 2010. We feel it is a lot of hot air that will do little to benefit electric users in Marin. Conversely, if it does not attract sufficient subscribers or incurs costs over and above rates, both ratepayers and the citizens of Marin will be left holding the bag. Adding insult to potential injury, MCE was studied by a government-funded task force and accepted \$1.5 million of taxpayer money to secure a contract with Shell. This startup money has not been repaid to the Board of Supervisors and local municipalities as promised. Finally, in a July 19, 2010 I/J Marin Voice article, Jim Phelps notes MEA’s original promise to “meet or beat” PG&E’s price for five years, later reduced to one year, has apparently now disappeared altogether and that while PG&E reduced prices 10 percent in June, MEA’s “higher-than-PG&E prices have not fallen.” Can MCE really survive on its own without taxpayer subsidy?

Distancing yourself from the MCE boondoggle. Even though P. G. & E. is a routine scapegoat for consumer complaints, it is likely the best choice for Marin electric users. How do you “opt out” from automatic MCE enrollment? It is not easy. The only time you can “opt out” is when MCE is ready to include you, not before then. Two notices will be provided 60 days in advance and two notices after your forced change date. To opt out, you MUST do so it within the window of opportunity. Our caution to MUTA members is to watch your P. G. & E. bills and any MCE letters you receive. Otherwise you will be a part of a growing new Marin bureaucracy.

The Cost of Illegal Immigration (Editors note: Submitted by Rick Oltman, CAPS (Californians for Population Stabilization) National media director, former FAIR (Federation for American Immigration Reform) representative and former Yes on 187 campaign chairman. It has been condensed for space.)

Nobody knows the exact cost, because nobody is keeping track of it, especially the government. They don’t want to know. The impact areas of illegal immigration are the “big four”: crime, education, healthcare and the environment.

Crime costs are the most obvious. The costs of illegal aliens in our state prisons and county jails approached a billion dollars a decade and a half ago. Illegal alien gangs run the drug trade. Phoenix, AZ, is the kidnapping capital of North America, all of it tied to illegal aliens and the drug cartels.

Education costs are huge. The California budget for education (\$65-\$70 billion/year) is roughly half the entire state budget. California schools are packed with illegal alien students and “anchor babies” who are citizens, but never-the-less are the result of the federal government’s refusal to enforce our immigration laws and secure the border. If 1/3 of K-12 students are illegal aliens or anchor babies that cost exceeds \$20 billion a year.

Healthcare costs are soaring as illegal aliens learn they can use our hospital's emergency rooms for everything. Hospitals have learned that they can code any treatment or emergency and send the bill to Sacramento for Medi-Cal (the taxpayers) to pay.

Environmental costs continue to go up. Mass illegal immigration leads to urban sprawl and use of farmlands and open space for more housing. Infrastructure costs increase as does the government bureaucracy at state, county and local level.

Nobody knows the real cost of illegal immigration to California or the country but we don't need exact numbers to understand that the cost is high and continues to rise. Unless our elected officials act to enforce the law, the costs will continue to rise and the taxpayer will continue to shoulder a burden that is unnecessary, unwise and unfair.

Taking responsibility (Editor's Note: This article by Bruce Abbott of Tiburon appeared in the Marin I/J on Sunday, September 19, 2010 in the Letters to the Editor section. It has been condensed for space.)

I went with my wife this afternoon to a well-known shopping center in Corte Madera. The parking lot was full, mostly with expensive foreign automobiles. The shops were stocked with goods made in Asia.

Shoes of synthetic materials made in China, with price tags of over \$100. Bicycles and consumer goods of all description, made somewhere across the waters. Clothing made in Bangladesh, India, Vietnam and so forth. Denim trousers costing over \$50 that were made in sweatshops across the Far East. The store staff was largely Latino immigrants. Our government wants us to revive spending in to stimulate the economy. Whose economy? I think my countrymen are insane.

I have friends whose son, an educated young man, could not find suitable employment in this country, [then] left for a European job a month or so ago. His parents own expensive German and Swedish automobiles, but it seems not to have occurred to them that there is a connection between those cars and the job their son could not find in this, his own country.

Our economy is flat on its back, and we continue to look to the government to solve our economic problems, while we blissfully run our own economy as if it had no influence on the national economy. The government got us into this problem.

If we are to get out, we, as individuals, must take the responsibility to get us out. We can do that only by fostering and supporting production right here in our own country.

An idea from Vermont Vermont passed an "education reform" (Act 60/68) in 1997. Since then, it has doubled property taxes for schools, which have had a 12% enrollment decline. Vermont now ranks 7th nationally in spending per pupil. The Vermont Coalition of Municipalities (an education finance reform group) is asking for a simple system to enable voters to understand the relationship between their vote on local school budgets and their resulting tax bill. That is, what did I just fund and what did I get? Paying taxes simply hands money to politicians who use it as a great slush fund to dole out as they please. Wouldn't it be nice if we could apply this accountability concept to all the taxes we pay?

Final thoughts

Coming in November is a discussion of the election and more information on the results of MUTA's FOIA probe to obtain information on local government spending. We'll also have information on getting your newsletter faster via e-mail. In the meantime, investigate the issues, decide the best way to vote, then do your civic duty and vote!