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## **CAL-TAX APPLAUDS SANTA CLARA COUNTY SUPERVISORS ON LIMITING EMERGENCY TELEPHONE TAXES**

SACRAMENTO – The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors’ rejection of a local telephone tax to pay for basic public safety operations sends a strong signal of opposition to “stealth” taxes, according to the California Taxpayers Association.

On April 20, the board voted 4-1 to turn down a proposed fee that would have required more than 100,000 county residents to pay an additional \$2.21 per phone line annually and businesses nearly \$200 a year – on top of existing “911” emergency charges.

Currently, consumers pay state “911” fees on their monthly telephone bills. Since this fund reimburses local governments for the money spent building and maintaining the physical 911 system, there is no reason to be pursuing additional taxes or fees on phone service.

The proposed fee in Santa Clara County was designed to raise \$1.5 million annually to be used to help reduce the county’s budget deficit. The proposal was introduced by county staff members searching for new ways to generate revenue.

“We applaud the supervisors for standing up for their taxpayers’ interests,” said Larry McCarthy, president of the Sacramento-based California Taxpayers’ Association (Cal-Tax). “The board’s vote reinforces the recognition that collecting fees for a specific use means that the funds should only be used for that purpose.

“In this instance, that means 911 fees should only be used for providing the 911 emergency call system and nothing more.”

McCarthy said that many local governments are looking for ways to increase general revenues without going to voters for approval of more taxes. “Attempts to raise fees, such as those dedicated to the emergency phone system, are merely efforts to circumvent laws that require voter approval of new taxes,” he said.

“Emergency telephone fees are intended to make sure there is a reliable system so people can make phone calls for emergency help, not to fund law enforcement functions, much less other general fund obligations for government,” said McCarthy. “If government can make a case for spending more money, it should ask voters directly to approve tax increases.”

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