

Sutter County Taxpayers Association

Honesty, Integrity and Cost Effectiveness in Government

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December 7, 2011

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TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION **SAYS COUNTY INITIATIVE FEES WRONG**

The Sutter County Taxpayers Association says action taken by the Sutter County Board of Supervisors last night will stifle the right of the public to petition their government.

“Charging individuals or groups \$118.25 an hour to verify signatures on petitions submitted by the public could add up to a cost of \$5,000 or more for 40 hours work,” Miller said. The board also passed a new \$200 filing fee for initiatives. “The high cost to bring an issue to a public vote will severely limit the public’s right to have a say in what their government is doing,” Miller said.

The petition charges were only one of nearly 100 pages on fees that were increased in nearly every county department by the Board of Supervisors last night.

Copying fees were also increased to \$3.75 per page in the Clerk/Recorder’s Office.

Copying costs in other departments vary and can be as high as \$6 in the Planning Department.

County officials say that the cost includes the staff time to pull the document. However, there is no charge if the requesting person walks away without requesting a copy which means there would, therefore, be no charge for the employee’s time.

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Taxpayers Association--2

There are also discrepancies in charges for school board filings. The charge for candidate statements for the Yuba College Board of Trustees is \$250 to \$500 depending on the district and the charge for filings for the Yuba City Unified School District Boards is \$250 to \$450 depending on the district. There is no explanation of why there is a difference in the county documents.

SCTA also has concerns as to how the charges were established. Normally a cost analysis study is made to establish a direct connection with the action required and the service received. The county's fee schedule is open to broad interpretation and criticism that income was the goal and not fairness in costs. SCTA believes that the functions that fees are being charged for are what county government is supposed to be providing their citizens through property and sales tax revenues. Instead fees are being charged for many of the services that county government should provide without charge.

SCTA is formally requesting that the county rescind the hourly fee for certifying signatures on an initiative as it is a clear attempt to limit the public's right to petition the government.

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