

# SCTA critical of China trip expenditures:

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## TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION CRITICAL OF CHINA TRIP

The Sutter County Taxpayers Association (SCTA), which has previously and continuously questioned the need for two city officials to travel to China to promote agriculture, has just learned that the city will also be paying the cost for Yuba Sutter Farm Bureau Director Mat Conant to also make the trip. Megan Foster, executive director of the Yuba-Sutter Farm Bureau said the Bureau wanted Conant to go “to ensure that grower interests are represented, and someone with strong knowledge of agriculture’s challenges and potential is present.” Foster said the Farm Bureau was concerned about the lack of agricultural expertise with the city officials.

On a three to one vote, city council voted to authorize the trip for Mayor John Buckland and Economic Development Commissioner Daren Gale at its April 2 meeting. Cost of the 10-day trip from May 12 to May 21 for each individual is \$4,725, for a total of \$14,175 for three people.

“How can city officials justify the expenditure of any taxpayer money, no matter how small, for a trip to China to promote agriculture when money is so tight that: 1) city employees are furloughed and city offices are closed every other Friday; 2) when the city owes \$42 million to CalPERS and bond holders for unpaid retirement contributions with indications from CalPERS that contributions will increase by up to 50% in the next five years; 3) when the city does not have all the fire fighters needed to eliminate fire station brown outs; and 4) when city officials do not have the expertise to talk agriculture?” questioned SCTA President Pat Miller.

“While this may be a great opportunity to increase trade with China, the effort and responsibility lies with the state/regional/local chambers of commerce and the state/regional/local farm bureaus, not the government. Governments are established to provide needed services for the citizens that cannot be provided by others and to create an environment that supports and encourages private enterprise to create businesses which create jobs,” Miller said. “City officials are wandering outside the realm of their responsibilities and/or expertise. They are not hired to directly promote economic growth and go globetrotting around the world under that pretense. Council members stated at the council meeting that there were businesspeople and farmers who would like to go to China and would pay their own way. SCTA says good for them and God speed. To city and county bureaucrats, let the business experts do their job - there are plenty of problems which need your attention right here,” Miller said.