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House Rules Committee
HB 3453

May 29th, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

As a taxpayer and a constituent from Josephine County I have many concerns and objections over this bill. As you know the majority of the population that returned ballots for this year's law enforcement levy found it unaffordable and voted it down. There are various reasons for this.

We have exercised our democratic process of majority rules and voted down a tax increase of over 255%. H.B. 3453 is a direct threat to our self governance and democratic process. It tells us that if we do not voluntarily tax ourselves when asked by our local governing body, the State will then implement a tax upon us against our will. This strongly resembles a monarchy and I feel, regardless of the amount of objections you receive, the backlash will be great if this approach is taken, as it should.

Josephine county is relatively sparsely populated with a majority of poor, impoverished, and retired families and individuals. We have no manufacturing base and this is not an agricultural county. Therefore, if you are fortunate enough to be employed, wages are low and do not constitute a living wage for the majority of the population living and working here. This is an easily proven statement.

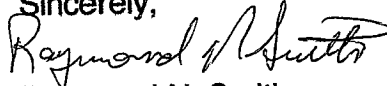
We heard "safety emergency" and "fiscal emergency" as soon as this recent levy failed. The majority of the voting populace of this county believes the only "fiscal emergency" is having an increased or new tax to pay for wages and benefits far beyond their own. The "safety emergency" simply does not exist at this time. There are ways to handle a true "safety emergency", should one ever take place, without the burden of more taxes.

The O. and C. funds from the federal government amounted to nothing more than a welfare check to timber reliant counties. This funding allowed these counties to over budget and inflate wages and benefits to public employees far beyond what is sustainable to the taxpayer of counties with now limited opportunities for work.

Josephine County recently posted a job for a committee member to research wages of elected officials in other counties to ensure they are being paid similarly. These wages and benefits must be brought in line with the people paying the bill. If that means drastic wage reductions, so be it. If it means bankruptcy to restructure because of contractual issues, that should be an option as well.

Rest assured if our elected officials and public employees did not want to work for a restructured taxpayer sustainable wage, this county has plenty of capable people that would fill the positions.

Sincerely,


Raymond N. Smith