

# Fran Blackney: Beware of California's proposed tax hikes

By Fran Blackney

Sacramento is glut with revenue. The governor recently proposed a \$113 billion budget — the largest in our state's history. Not only will this budget increase spending, there's enough left over to pay off debt and put money away in the rainy day fund.

Unfortunately, legislators are not content with record breaking revenues and budgets. The tax-and-spend crowd still insists on increasing the tax bite. California's status as one of the highest taxed states in the country just isn't good enough for them.

In January, the legislators revealed their proposed bills for this year. And, of course, there are several proposals to raise taxes. They simply can't help themselves.

On top of the bills introduced, there is talk in Sacramento about ballot initiatives to raise property taxes, and add an oil severance tax, a soda tax and a tobacco tax!

In 2012, Californians approved Proposition 30, the temporary income tax and half-cent sales tax. The bulk of the tax increases falls on the highest wage earners, but the sales tax hike hits everybody, including the poor who are hit the hardest.

When this is mentioned by tax opponents, supporters scoff and reply that it's only "a few cents." A few cents add up quickly. And, after only two years, there are already rumblings in Sacramento to make this temporary tax permanent!

The recent hidden gas tax hikes are also only "a few cents," around 10 to 15 cents per gallon. But once again, they hurt the poor the most who drive older cars that are not fuel efficient.

The state has been able to hide behind lower gas prices to sneak their hidden gas tax in at the pumps. But prices have edged up by almost a dollar. Now those taxes stick out like a sore thumb and people are noticing. What adds to the frustration is that most people can't avoid using their cars to get to work, take their children to school or shop for food.

The most dangerous proposal is Senate Bill by Sen. Robert M. Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys. It would impose sales taxes on services and raise at least \$10 billion a year. SB 8 adds to the just "a few cents" mentality that Sacramento politicians love.

The Clovis Chamber of Commerce is especially concerned about our Valley residents.

With our unemployment rate above the state average, too many people have scant funds to spend since our region has been slow to recover from the recession. More taxes means less money to be spent in businesses and for crucial services. Even "a few cents" can make a difference in their quality of life.

Of course, citizens have a responsibility to help pay for essential parts of government. But government has a responsibility to its citizens to spend the money wisely and responsibly.

Before asking for citizens to pay higher taxes, the government should determine how much money it has and choose the most effective way to spend it. Instead, they find pet projects they would like to fund, then raise our taxes.

The results are wasted spending on inessential programs that has created an insatiable tax beast demanding to be fed.

This ever-expanding tax beast needs to be put on a strict diet.

Fran Blackney is business advocate and communications director for the Clovis Chamber of Commerce.