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VICE CHAIR  
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## **Vice Chairperson Jerome Horton Calls on Tax Agencies to Take Aggressive Action in Combating Human Trafficking**

California State Board of Equalization (BOE) Vice Chairperson Jerome E. Horton is calling on California's tax agencies to join the fight against human trafficking in California.

Today, Mr. Horton issued a letter to the Directors of the Board of Equalization (BOE), the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) and the Employment Development Department (EDD) urging them to take action to address the tragedy of human trafficking and its impact on the taxes that the tax agencies are responsible for administering. Mr. Horton commented, "the tragedy of human trafficking has a very real impact on the taxes that our agencies are responsible for administering. Employers who exploit workers in this way inevitably engage in illegal tax evasion – they fail to pay their employment taxes and insurance, their income tax, and their sales and use tax. This is a large, and growing, part of the underground economy that has undermined California's legitimate businesses and government services for a long time."

To help address this problem in California, Mr. Horton has proposed partnering with the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Human Trafficking (CAST) to implement a state-wide training program for the state's auditors and investigators. Such training would empower them to not only enforce the tax laws and collect what is due from these underground economy operations, but assist in the state and national efforts to eradicate human trafficking by recognizing the signs of potential human trafficking and reporting suspected cases to the appropriate authorities.

Kay Buck, the Executive Director of CAST, responded that "this is a very difficult problem to solve, given that victims often have little to no opportunity of coming forward and seeking help. Many times, for victims to gain freedom, help must come to them. Training agencies that have direct contact with the business community are a critical component to gaining and preserving freedom."

You can report trafficking crimes and get help by calling the Department of Justice Trafficking in Persons and Worker Exploitation Task Force Complaint Line at 1-888-428-7581 (voice and TTY). New laws provide options for trafficking victims regardless of immigration status. Op

erators have access to interpreters and can talk with callers in their own language. The service is offered on weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. EST. After hours, information is available on tape in English, Spanish, Russian, and Mandarin.

**Vice Chairperson Jerome E. Horton is the 4th District Member of the BOE, representing more than 8.5 million residents in Los Angeles County. He is also the BOE Legislative Committee Chairperson. Horton is the first African American to serve on the BOE since its inception in 1879, and the third African American constitutional officer in California's history. Horton was appointed by the Governor and confirmed by both the Assembly and the Senate in 2009. Horton previously served as an Assembly member from 2000-2006.**

**The five-member California State Board of Equalization is a publicly elected tax board. The BOE collects more than \$53 billion annually in taxes and fees supporting state and local government services. It hears business tax appeals, acts as the appellate body for franchise and personal income tax appeals, and serves a significant role in the assessment and administration of property taxes. For more information on other taxes and fees in California, visit [www.taxes.ca.gov](http://www.taxes.ca.gov).**

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