



State Board of Equalization

News Release

Vice Chair Michelle Steel

3rd District – Rolling Hills Estates

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Save Receipts from Online Purchases

Use Tax May be Owed on Purchases from Out-of-State Retailers

Michelle Steel, Vice Chair of the California State Board of Equalization (BOE), is today reminding Californians that while online shopping is a convenient way to quickly take care of holiday gift needs, use tax may be owed on those purchases made from out-of-state retailers.

Use tax is what is owed by the consumer on items purchased from out-of-state retailers that do not collect sales or use tax. That includes purchases made through the Internet, by mail-order or over the phone. Use tax has been law since 1935 in California.

The easiest way for consumers to report and pay use tax is on the California state income tax return. On the line called "Use Tax," consumers should put the amount of use tax owed and send in the payment. Use tax owed is calculated on the purchase price of the item and sales tax rate in your local area. Sales tax rates in California range from 7.25% - 9.75%, depending upon where you live.

Consumers should retain their receipts and invoices and check to see if sales or use tax was collected at the time of sale. Consumers should also look for other indications that there is no use tax obligation, or that it has been taken care of, for example a notation that the item was shipped from within the state, or an invoice or statement that California tax requirements have been met.

While the simplest way for a consumer to pay use tax is through the use tax line on the income tax return, consumers may also register with the BOE for a consumer use tax account to report and pay use tax. For more information, visit the BOE website at www.boe.ca.gov.

Elected to the Board of Equalization in 2006 and re-elected in 2010, Michelle Steel serves as *Southern California's elected taxpayer advocate*. In December 2007, Steel discovered the Board of Equalization had delayed the return of millions of dollars in security deposits owed to California businesses. Procedures were changed due to Steel's decisive leadership. Following her investigation, the tax agency refunded tax security deposits to over 5,500 small businesses. To date, over \$100 million in security deposits have been returned to taxpayers.

The five-member California State Board of Equalization (BOE) is a publicly elected tax board. The BOE collects more than \$50 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.

California Use Tax Information: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/taxprograms/usetax/index.html>

Ecommerce Estimate: <http://www.boe.ca.gov/legdiv/pdf/e-commerce-11-10.pdf>

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