

**Initial Statement of Reasons for  
Proposed Amendments to California Code of Regulations,  
Title 18, Section 1590, *Newspapers and Periodicals***

SPECIFIC PURPOSES, PROBLEM INTENDED TO BE ADDRESSED, NECESSITY, AND  
ANTICIPATED BENEFIT

Current Law

California imposes sales tax on retailers for the privilege of selling tangible personal property at retail. (Rev. & Tax. Code (RTC), § 6051.) Unless an exemption or exclusion applies, the tax is measured by a retailer's gross receipts from the retail sale of tangible personal property in California. (RTC, §§ 6012, 6051.) The term "gross receipts" means the total amount of the sale price without any deduction for the cost of materials used, labor or service costs, interest paid, losses, or any other expense. (RTC, § 6012, subd. (a)(2).) Although sales tax is imposed on retailers, retailers may collect sales tax reimbursement from their customers if their contracts of sale so provide. (Civ. Code, § 1656.1; Cal. Code Regs., tit. 18, § (Regulation or Reg.) 1700.) It is presumed that all gross receipts are subject to the sales tax until the contrary is established, and the burden of proving that a sale of tangible personal property is not a sale at retail is upon the person who makes the sale unless he takes from the purchaser a resale certificate. (RTC, § 6091.)

When sales tax does not apply, use tax is imposed on the use of tangible personal property purchased from a retailer for storage, use, or other consumption in California. (RTC, §§ 6201, 6401.) Unless an exemption or exclusion applies, the use tax is measured by the sales price of tangible personal property and the person actually storing, using, or otherwise consuming the property is liable for the tax. (RTC, §§ 6201, 6202.) However, every retailer "engaged in business" in California that makes sales subject to California use tax is required to collect the use tax from its customers and remit it to the State Board of Equalization (Board), and such retailers are liable for California use tax that they fail to collect from their customers and remit to the Board. (RTC, §§ 6203, 6204; Reg. 1684.) For purposes of the use tax, it is presumed that tangible personal property sold by any person for delivery in California is sold for storage, use, or other consumption in this state until the contrary is established and the burden of proving the contrary is upon the person who makes the sale, unless he takes from the purchaser a resale certificate. (RTC, § 6241.)

"Tangible personal property" means "personal property which may be seen, weighed, measured, felt, or touched, or which is in any other manner perceptible to the senses." Whereas tax is only imposed on transactions involving tangible personal property, neither sales tax nor use tax is imposed on charges entirely for the provision of services. (RTC, §§ 6051, 6201; Reg. 1501.) Further, a transaction is not subject to tax if the true object of the transaction is to obtain the provision of services, even though some tangible personal property is transferred incidental to the provision of the services. (Reg. 1501.) On the other hand, a transaction is entirely subject to tax when the true object of the transaction is to obtain tangible personal property and services are part of the sale of tangible personal property. (RTC, § 6012, subd. (b)(1); Reg. 1501; see Reg. 1524, subd. (a).)

A “mixed transaction,” in contrast, is a transaction in which “the goods and services . . . are distinct (not intertwined) and each is a significant object of the transaction (not one incidental to the other).” (*Dell, Inc. v. Superior Court (Dell)* (2008) 159 Cal.App.4th 911, 925.) If a transaction is a “mixed transaction,” each element of the transaction is analyzed as a separate transaction, and tax is applied to the tangible personal property portion and the service portion is not taxed. (*Ibid.*) The Board and the Board’s Legal Department have previously concluded that the Sales and Use Tax Law (RTC, § 6001 et seq.) generally requires taxpayers to make a “reasonable” and “fair” allocation of a lump-sum charge based upon the value of the taxable and nontaxable portions of a mixed transaction. (See, e.g., Reg. 1603, subd. (a)(2)(A) [reasonable allocation to nontaxable rooms and taxable meals]; Sales and Use Tax Annotations 120.0104 (1/24/90) [fair and reasonable allocation to nontaxable database access and taxable software], 295.0035.200 (4/28/86) [reasonable allocation to nontaxable theatrical performance and taxable balloons], 515.0002.900 (4/23/86) [reasonable allocation to nontaxable color consulting services and taxable color book], 550.0343 (7/19/85) [reasonable allocation between nontaxable theatrical performance and taxable meals].)<sup>1</sup> In the case where the lump-sum price of both elements together is less than their combined individual prices, the Board’s Legal Department has previously opined that it is appropriate to allocate to the taxable tangible personal property and to the nontaxable service proportionally, relative to the value of the tangible personal property and non-taxable service.

Also, as relevant here, RTC section 6362.3 exempts from tax the sale or use of newspapers or periodicals, during the term of a prepaid subscription entered into and paid for prior to July 15, 1991. RTC section 6362.7 exempts from tax the sale or use of newspapers and periodicals, and the components thereof, that are distributed without charge and issued at average intervals not exceeding three months, and the sale or use of periodicals, and the components thereof, regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months and sold by subscription. RTC section 6362.7 contains a definition of “periodical” which includes the requirement that a periodical appear at stated intervals at least four times per year, but not more than 60 times per year. RTC section 6362.8 exempts from tax the sale or use of newspapers and periodicals, and the components thereof, issued at average intervals not exceeding three months that are published by specified tax-exempt organizations or non-profit organizations when certain other statutory conditions are satisfied.

In addition, Regulation 1590, *Newspapers and Periodicals*, implements, interprets, and makes specific the RTC sections that pertain to the application of tax to newspapers and periodicals. It provides that a “newspaper” is a publication that is “commonly understood to be a newspaper” and is “printed and distributed periodically at daily, weekly, or other short intervals for the dissemination of news of a general character and of general interest.” (Reg. 1590, subd. (a)(1).) It explains that, since July 15, 1991, the sale of newspapers and periodicals is subject to tax unless otherwise exempt. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(1).) It provides notice regarding the exemption for subscriptions ordered and paid for prior to July 15, 1991. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(3), (8).) It

---

<sup>1</sup> Annotations are summaries of the conclusions reached in selected opinions of attorneys of the Board’s Legal Department and are intended to provide guidance regarding the interpretation of statutes and Board regulations as applied by staff to specific factual situations. (See Reg. 5700.)

also provides that the exemption for newspapers and periodicals distributed without charge was first effective October 2, 1991. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(2).)

Further, Regulation 1590 explains that each delivery of a newspaper or periodical pursuant to a subscription is a separate sale transaction. It also provides that the exemption for periodicals sold by subscription was effective for transactions on or after November 1, 1992, and it provides that sales tax reimbursement collected on the sale of a periodical subscription prior to November 1, 1992, but for the sale of issues delivered on or after November 1, 1992, constitutes excess sales tax reimbursement and must either be refunded to the customer or paid to the Board. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(3).)

Furthermore, Regulation 1590 provides that the exemption for newspapers and periodicals published by specified tax-exempt organizations was first effective November 1, 1991, and that the requirement that such newspapers and periodicals be regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months was added to the exemption effective November 1, 1992. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(5)(A).) It also explains that the exemption for newspapers and periodicals published by nonprofit organizations was first effective November 1, 1991, and it incorporates the statutory requirements for the exemption, but it omits the statutory requirement that newspapers and periodicals be regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months. (Reg. 1590, subd. (b)(5)(B).)

### Proposed Amendments

When Regulation 1590 was last amended in 1994, newspaper publishers generally sold printed newspapers. However, since then, technology and reader preferences have evolved, and newspaper publishers regularly sell digital services over the Internet, including access to digital content, such as online editions of the newspapers they sell. Often, the access to the digital content includes material that is not otherwise provided with a printed publication alone, such as expanded articles, additional photographs, and mobile applications. Also, access to the digital content may be sold as a stand-alone service (e.g., daily access to digital content only) for a separately stated price or sold in combination with a subscription for printed newspaper delivery for a lump-sum price with each being a significant object of the transaction. The access to digital content and frequency of delivery of the printed newspapers may vary in the subscription packages (e.g., daily print and daily access to digital content or weekend print and daily access to digital content). And, as an incentive, the lump-sum price a publisher charges for access to digital content sold in combination with a subscription for printed newspaper delivery is generally lower than the sum of the prices at which the publisher would separately sell the access to the digital content or the subscription for printed newspaper delivery.

Charges for printed newspapers that appear more than 60 times a year are subject to tax under Regulation 1590. However, no portion of a charge for access to digital content via the Internet (digital only subscription) is subject to tax if the purchaser does not obtain possession of any tangible personal property, such as storage media, in the transaction. (See, e.g., Reg. 1502, subd. (f)(1)(D)). Also, under *Dell, supra*, only a portion of a lump-sum charge for both digital services provided over the Internet without the transfer of tangible personal property and a subscription for taxable printed newspaper delivery is subject to tax because both the digital services and the

printed newspapers are significant objects of the contract. Publishers are required to make a reasonable and fair allocation of such a lump-sum charge based upon the value of the taxable and nontaxable portions of the mixed transaction. And, guidance has previously been requested about how to make an acceptable allocation. Therefore, the Board's Business Taxes Committee (BTC) staff determined that there is an issue (or problem within the meaning of Gov. Code, 11346.2, subd. (b)) because Regulation 1590 does not provide guidance to newspaper retailers about how to make an acceptable allocation of a lump-sum charge for a subscription for printed newspaper delivery and access to digital content.

Initially, BTC staff prepared draft amendments to Regulation 1590 to address the issue discussed above. The draft amendments proposed to add a new subdivision (a)(8) to define a "mixed newspaper subscription" as a subscription for a tangible newspaper combined with a subscription for the right to access digital content, and amend subdivision (b)(3) to set thirty-eight (38) percent as the portion of all lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions that are for access to digital content and therefore not subject to tax, on a prospective basis. BTC staff recommended this approach because it would provide clarity and certainty to retailers, consumers, and Board staff and BTC staff arrived at the figure of 38 percent based solely on data previously provided by a retailer that requested an opinion from the Board's Legal Department with regard to its mixed newspaper subscription transactions. BTC staff recommended that the amendments pertaining to the application of tax to mixed newspaper subscriptions have a prospective application so that retailers of such subscriptions are notified well in advance of the date the amendments are operative.

In addition, the draft amendments to Regulation 1590 proposed changes to make the provisions of subdivision (b)(5) regarding the exemptions for newspapers and periodicals published by tax-exempt organizations and nonprofit organizations more clearly follow the language of RTC section 6362.8 requiring that newspapers and periodicals be regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months. The draft amendments also proposed to delete the references to 1990's effective dates and obsolete guidance regarding early 1990's transactions (discussed above) from subdivision (b) because the references and guidance are no longer relevant.

BTC staff subsequently provided its draft amendments to interested parties and conducted an interested parties meeting on August 5, 2015. During the August 2015 meeting, the interested parties were supportive of the approach of allowing a retailer to use a single percentage to determine the nontaxable portions of the lump-sum charges for all mixed newspaper subscriptions (of varying frequency of delivery). However, the interested parties did not agree with the nontaxable percentage in the draft amendments and recommended that the draft amendments be revised to provide a rebuttable presumption that the nontaxable percentage applies so that retailers can rebut the presumption when there are unique facts and circumstances. Therefore, BTC staff requested additional input from the interested parties regarding other alternative nontaxable percentages with backup data to support the alternate suggestions, and asked the interested parties to provide examples of documentation they could provide to establish that there are unique facts and circumstances related to a mixed newspaper subscription and thereby rebut a presumption that the nontaxable percentage applies.

Following the interested parties meeting, BTC staff received comments from Mr. James Ewert on behalf of the California Newspaper Publishers Association (CNPA), in a letter dated August 17, 2015. The CNPA expressed support in concept of BTC staff's proposed amendments and acknowledged that the proposed amendments recognize the growing use of mixed subscriptions within the newspaper industry. The CNPA further asserted that BTC staff's proposed percentage for determining the nontaxable portion of a mixed newspaper subscription may not reflect the circulation practices of the entire newspaper industry. The CNPA stated that it was in the process of examining various methodologies and obtaining information to support the assertion. The CNPA also reiterated comments made at the interested parties meeting that the proposed amendments should only establish a rebuttable presumption that the proposed nontaxable percentage applies with the idea being that a seller of mixed newspaper subscriptions could apply an alternate nontaxable percentage when supported by unique facts and circumstances.

Following the interested parties meeting, BTC staff reviewed the websites of several major California newspapers and used the available information to calculate an average ratio of the price of a subscription for access to digital content only to a subscription that includes both daily print delivery and access to digital content, which supported staff's initial nontaxable percentage. However, there was insufficient information available to establish similar ratios for the same newspapers' mixed newspaper subscriptions that include less than daily print delivery, such as weekend print delivery subscriptions. Based on this initial research, BTC staff, in the Second Discussion Paper, proposed to amend Regulation 1590, subdivision (b)(3), to include two different nontaxable percentages. BTC staff suggested adding subdivision (b)(3)(B)(1) to specify the taxable and nontaxable percentages applicable to mixed newspaper subscriptions in which delivery of printed material occurs four or more days per week and further proposed adding subdivision (b)(3)(B)(2) to specify the taxable and nontaxable percentages applicable to newspaper subscriptions in which delivery of printed material occurs three days or less per week. Based on the initial research, BTC staff proposed setting thirty-eight (38) percent as the nontaxable portion of lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions in which delivery of printed material occurs four or more days per week. Based upon limited data and some assumptions, staff provided sample language establishing forty-eight (48) percent as the nontaxable portion of lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions in which delivery of printed material occurs three days or less per week for purposes of further discussion. However, staff also requested more data from industry to determine an appropriate percentage for subscriptions in which printed delivery occurs less than four days per week. In addition, BTC staff stated that it would consider adding a "safe harbor" provision to the regulation, so that there is a rebuttable presumption that the stated nontaxable percentages apply, which could be overcome by evidence establishing a different percentage, but staff reiterated that such provision should explain the types of evidence or documentation that a retailer would retain to rebut the presumption.

On September 29, 2015, BTC staff again met with the interested parties to discuss the draft amendments. The interested parties did not support using two different percentages. Following the interested parties meeting, staff received comments from Mr. Ewert on behalf of the CNPA, in a letter dated November 3, 2015. The CNPA explained that two rates would be considerably burdensome and unnecessarily complicated for the newspapers to calculate with little, if any, benefit to the newspapers or the Board and that they did not support this approach. The CNPA

presented a list of twenty-seven (27) newspapers they surveyed with nontaxable percentages ranging from forty-four (44) percent to sixty-three (63) percent, and an overall unweighted average nontaxable percentage of fifty-three (53) percent for all twenty-seven newspapers combined. The CNPA provided staff with a copy of their confidential data and calculations, which also showed that to compute the nontaxable percentages, the CNPA divided each newspaper's digital-only subscription rate by the sums of the newspaper's print-only subscription rates (i.e., 6 or 7 day a week rate, weekend rate, and Sunday only rate) and the digital-only subscription rate. They then averaged these percentages together for each newspaper publisher to arrive at each newspaper's nontaxable percentage and then averaged all twenty-seven (27) newspapers' nontaxable percentages together. (Attachment A contains the redacted data and calculations.) The CNPA also asserted that many newspapers were decreasing the frequency of their print products and relying more on digital content and that the overall unweighted average nontaxable percentage of fifty-three (53) percent (referred to above) does not accurately reflect rapidly changing developments in the industry. For these reasons, the CNPA proposed that "sixty (60) percent is a more accurate percentage for purposes of establishing a rebuttable presumption that reflects the non-taxable digital portion of a Mixed Newspaper Subscription." In addition, the CNPA proposed language to be added to subdivision (b)(3) to establish a rebuttable presumption.

Following this submission, BTC staff informally met with interested parties to discuss these issues. BTC staff also reviewed the data provided by the CNPA, determined the number of subscribers for each newspaper using data obtained from the Gale Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media (151st edition), and calculated a weighted average nontaxable percentage of approximately fifty (50) percent for all twenty-seven newspapers combined, so as not to give disproportionate weight to smaller publishers' average nontaxable percentages. (Attachment B contains BTC staff's calculation of the weighted average nontaxable percentage.) Based on the industry data, the CNPA's and BTC staff's calculations, and interested parties' presentation of evidence during their discussions that the nontaxable percentage is trending upwards, BTC staff concluded that the unweighted average nontaxable percentage of fifty-three (53) percent, as calculated by the CNPA, will accurately reflect the average nontaxable percentage of newspaper retailers' lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscription by the time the amendments are effective.

BTC staff also determined that because of the great variance within the newspaper industry with respect to pricing models and product offerings, the fact that there is an upward trend in the nontaxable percentages of lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions, and the need to ensure that all newspaper retailers' lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions continue to be fairly and reasonably allocated between the taxable and nontaxable components of the subscriptions, it is necessary to add a rebuttable presumption to the regulation that allows a newspaper retailer to document a higher nontaxable percentage than fifty-three (53) percent based on the specific facts of that retailer's business. Therefore, BTC staff revised its proposed amendments adding subdivision (b)(3), so that new subdivision (b)(3)(B)1 establishes a rebuttable presumption that fifty-three (53) percent of the lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is nontaxable, on or after October 1, 2016; and new subdivision (b)(3)(B)2 explains that retailers may rebut the presumption by providing evidence demonstrating to the satisfaction of the Board that the price of the digital-only subscription rate

divided by the sum of the digital-only subscription rate and the print-only subscription rate is greater than fifty-three (53) percent. (The same methodology the CNPA used to make the calculations in Attachment A.) The revised language also required that records be maintained to support any nontaxable percentage greater than fifty-three (53) percent. In addition, BTC staff proposed adding new subdivisions (a)(9) and (10) to the regulation to define “digital-only subscription” and “print-only subscription” for purposes of applying the formula proposed to be added to subdivision (b)(3)(B)2.

Subsequently, BTC staff prepared Formal Issue Paper 15-012 and distributed it to the Board Members for consideration at the Board’s January 26, 2016, BTC meeting. Formal Issue Paper 15-012 recommended that the Board propose to adopt BTC staff’s amendments to Regulation 1590 discussed above to address the issue (or problem) discussed above by providing guidance to newspaper retailers about how to make a reasonable and fair allocation of a lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription based upon the value of the taxable and nontaxable portions of the mixed transaction.

Specifically, BTC staff’s proposed amendments added definitions for the terms “mixed newspaper subscription,” “digital-only subscription rate,” and “print-only subscription rate” to subdivision (a). The proposed amendments clarified in subdivision (b)(3) that in “the sale of a mixed newspaper subscription, tax is applied to the tangible personal property portion of the transaction (unless otherwise exempt or excluded) and the right to access the digital content is not subject to tax.” The proposed amendments established in new subdivision (b)(3)(B) that on and after October 1, 2016, it is presumed that fifty-three (53) percent of the charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is for the nontaxable sale of the right to access digital content. The proposed amendments also provided in new subdivision (b)(3)(B) that the “presumption may be overcome by evidence demonstrating to the satisfaction of the Board that the digital-only subscription rate divided by the sum of the print-only subscription rate and the digital-only subscription rate is greater than fifty-three (53) percent.”

Furthermore, as discussed above, BTC staff’s proposed amendments made changes to make the provisions of subdivision (b)(5) regarding the exemptions for newspapers and periodicals published by tax-exempt organizations and nonprofit organizations more clearly follow the language of RTC section 6362.8 requiring that newspapers and periodicals be regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months. The proposed amendments also deleted the references to 1990’s effective dates and obsolete guidance regarding early 1990’s transactions from subdivision (b) because the references and guidance are no longer relevant, and deleted the reference to RTC section 6362.3 from the regulation’s reference note because the statute’s provisions are only applicable to early 1990’s transactions.

In addition, BTC staff’s proposed amendments made minor formatting changes to replace the boxes that are required to be initialed in Exemption Certificates A through D set forth in Regulation 1590 and replace the boxes that are required to be checked on Exemption Certificate C with lines that can be initialed and checked, respectively. Staff’s proposed amendments deleted the outdated references to “19” from the exemption certificates’ date lines because the exemption certificates will no longer be signed with dates in the 1900s. Staff’s proposed amendments deleted the word “the” from the phrase “measured by the purchase price of *the* such

property” (italics added) in Exemption Certificate B to make the phrase grammatically correct. Staff’s proposed amendments inserted the word “seller’s” before the word “permit” in the text following the second line that can be initialed on Exemption Certificate C to clarify that the current text refers to a seller’s permit, as opposed to some other type of permit. Staff’s proposed amendments inserted “the” before “business” in the phrase “engaged in business of selling or publishing” in Exemption Certificate D to make the phrase grammatically correct. Staff’s proposed amendments also added language to Exemption Certificates C and D to require that purchasers certify that they are engaged in the business of selling or publishing a newspaper or periodical “which is regularly issued at average intervals not exceeding three months” to comply with the requirements of RTC section 6362.8 regarding the exemption for newspapers and periodicals published by tax-exempt and nonprofit organizations.

The Board discussed Formal Issue Paper 15-012 during its January 26, 2016, BTC meeting. Mr. Ewert appeared on behalf of the CNPA and expressed the CNPA’s support for staff’s proposed amendments. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board Members unanimously voted to propose to adopt the amendments to Regulation 1590 recommended by staff.

The Board determined that the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 are reasonably necessary for the specific purpose of addressing the issue (or problem) with Regulation 1590, discussed above, by providing guidance regarding the application of tax to mixed newspaper subscriptions, establishing, beginning October 1, 2016, a rebuttable presumption that fifty-three (53) percent of the lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is for the nontaxable sale of the right to access digital content, and establishing the means by which newspaper retailers may rebut the presumption. The Board also determined that the proposed amendments are reasonably necessary for the specific purposes of ensuring that the provisions of Regulation 1590, including the provisions of Exemption Certificates C and D, clearly follow and are consistent with the current provisions of RTC section 6362.8 regarding the exemption for newspapers and periodicals published by tax-exempt and nonprofit organizations, and deleting the outdated references to 1990’s effective dates and obsolete guidance regarding early 1990’s transactions from the regulation.

The Board anticipates that the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 will promote fairness and benefit taxpayers, Board staff, and the Board by providing clarity with regard to the application of tax to lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions, particularly because of the increasing focus on digital content in the newspaper industry.

In addition, the Board has determined that the proposed amendments are not mandated by federal law or regulations, and there are no federal regulations or statutes that are identical to Regulation 1590 or the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590.

#### DOCUMENTS RELIED UPON

The Board relied upon Formal Issue Paper 15-012, the exhibits to the issue paper, the data and calculations in Attachments A and B to this initial statement of reasons, and the comments made during the Board’s discussion of the issue paper during its January 26, 2016, BTC meeting in deciding to propose the amendments to Regulation 1590 described above.

## ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The Board considered whether to begin the formal rulemaking process to adopt the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 recommended by staff at this time or whether to take no action at this time. The Board decided to begin the formal rulemaking process to propose to adopt staff's recommended amendments to Regulation 1590 at this time because the Board determined that the proposed amendments are reasonably necessary for the reasons set forth above.

The Board did not reject any reasonable alternative to the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 that would lessen any adverse impact the proposed action may have on small business or that would be less burdensome and equally effective in achieving the purposes of the proposed action. No reasonable alternative has been identified and brought to the Board's attention that would lessen any adverse impact the proposed action may have on small business, be more effective in carrying out the purposes for which the action is proposed, would be as effective and less burdensome to affected private persons than the proposed action, or would be more cost effective to affected private persons and equally effective in implementing the statutory policy or other provision of law than the proposed action.

## INFORMATION REQUIRED BY GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 11346.2, SUBDIVISION (b)(5) AND ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED BY GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 11346.3, SUBDIVISION (b)

As previously explained, the proposed amendments add definitions for the terms "mixed newspaper subscription," "digital-only subscription rate" and "print-only subscription rate" to subdivision (a) of Regulation 1590. The proposed amendments clarify, in subdivision (b)(3)(B) of the regulation, that in the sale of a mixed newspaper subscription, tax is applied to the tangible personal property portion of the transaction and tax is not applied to the portion of the transaction associated with the sale of the right to access digital content, and establish that, on and after October 1, 2016, fifty-three (53) percent of the lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is presumed to be for the nontaxable portion, based upon the current trend in the industry and the data and calculations in Attachment A. The proposed amendments clarify that the presumption may be overcome by evidence demonstrating that the portion of the charge associated with the digital subscription is greater than fifty three percent using the same methodology used to make the calculations in Attachment A. The proposed amendments also make changes to subdivision (b)(5) and Exemption Certificates C and D so that the subdivision and certificates more clearly follow the language of RTC section 6362.8. In addition, the proposed amendments delete outdated references to 1990's effective dates and obsolete guidance regarding early 1990's transactions from the regulation, reformat the regulation's exemption certificates, and make minor non-substantive changes to Exemption Certificates B, C, and D.

The proposed amendments do not change the application of tax to mixed newspaper subscriptions because, as explained above, only a portion of a lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is currently subject to tax under *Dell, supra*. The RTC, as previously interpreted by the Board and Board's Legal Department, currently requires newspaper retailers to make a "reasonable" and "fair" allocation of such a lump-sum charge based upon the values of

the taxable and nontaxable portions of the mixed transaction and the proposed amendments continue to require such a reasonable and fair allocation consistent with long-standing precedent. Also, beginning October 1, 2016, the proposed amendments permit newspaper retailers to reasonably and fairly allocate fifty-three percent of such a lump-sum charge to the nontaxable sale of the right to access digital content based upon the CNPA's calculation, which established that, on average, fifty-three (53) percent of the current charges for 27 newspapers' mixed newspaper subscriptions are charges for the right to access digital content. And, the proposed amendments incorporate the formula the CNPA used to calculate the portion of such a lump-sum charge that is for the nontaxable right to access digital content and permit newspaper retailers to use the formula to establish that more than fifty-three (53) percent of the lump-sum charge for a mixed newspaper subscription is for the nontaxable right to access digital content, to ensure that tax continues to be applied to the tangible personal property portion, but not the service portion, of such a mixed transaction, consistent with *Dell, supra*.

As a result, the proposed amendments provide guidance about how tax currently applies to lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions, and there is nothing in the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 that would significantly change how retailers and consumers of newspapers would generally behave in the absence of the proposed amendments. In addition, the amendments to Regulation 1590 do not require that individuals and businesses do anything that is not currently required and do not impose any costs on any persons. And, the Research and Statistics Section of the Board's Legislative and Research Division determined that there is nothing in the proposed amendments that would impact revenue. (See Exhibit 1 to Formal Issue Paper 15-012.) Therefore, the Board estimates that the proposed amendments will not have a measurable economic impact on individuals and business. The Board has determined that the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 are not a major regulation, as defined in Government Code section 11342.548 and California Code of Regulations, title 1, section 2000, because the Board has estimated that the proposed amendments will not have an economic impact on California business enterprises and individuals in an amount exceeding fifty million dollars (\$50,000,000) during any 12-month period. And, the Board anticipates that the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 will promote fairness and benefit taxpayers, Board staff, and the Board by providing clarity with regard to the application of tax to lump-sum charges for mixed newspaper subscriptions, particularly because of the increasing focus on digital content in the newspaper industry.

Further, based on these facts and all of the information in the rulemaking file, the Board has also determined that the adoption of the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 will neither create nor eliminate jobs in the State of California nor result in the elimination of existing businesses nor create new businesses or expand businesses currently doing business in the State of California.

Furthermore, Regulation 1590 does not regulate the health and welfare of California residents, worker safety, or the state's environment. Therefore, the Board has also determined that the adoption of the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 will not affect the benefits of Regulation 1590 to the health and welfare of California residents, worker safety, or the state's environment.

The forgoing information also provides the factual basis for the Board's initial determination that the adoption of the proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 will not have a significant adverse economic impact on business.

The proposed amendments to Regulation 1590 may affect small businesses.

# Attachment A

Delivery frequency	Avg Rate (Wkly)									
7Day / 6Day	\$ 3.81	\$ 4.20	\$ 4.75	\$ 4.67	\$ 2.44	\$ 3.37	\$ 4.25	\$ 4.73	\$ 3.96	
Mon-Fri	\$ 1.93	\$ 2.07	\$ 2.08	\$ 1.30		\$ 1.25	\$ 1.35			
SunOnly	\$ 1.71	\$ 0.98	\$ 1.31	\$ 1.66	\$ 1.47	\$ 1.59	\$ 1.69	\$ 1.62	\$ 1.79	
Thu-Sun	\$ 2.10	\$ 1.98	\$ 2.02	\$ 2.19	\$ 2.08	\$ 2.02	\$ 2.15	\$ 2.26	\$ 2.18	
Digital only	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	\$ 2.50	
7Day / 6Day	40%	37%	35%	35%	51%	43%	37%	35%	39%	
Mon-Fri	56%	55%	55%	66%		67%	65%			
SunOnly	59%	72%	66%	60%	63%	61%	60%	61%	58%	
Thu-Sun	54%	56%	55%	53%	55%	55%	54%	52%	53%	
Overall Allocation %	52%	55%	53%	54%	56%	56%	54%	49%	50%	

7 day	9.25	7	7.99	5.99	4	5.25	6.5	4.75	4.25	
wknd	3.62	1.82	3.03	2.2			1.2	0.86	0.58	
sun only	1.71	0.7	1.05	0.94			2.15			
Digital only	4.5	3.99	3.99	3.99	2.99	2.99	3.99	2.99	2.99	
7 day	33%	36%	33%	40%	43%	36%	38%	39%	41%	
wknd	55%	69%	57%	64%			77%	78%	84%	
sun only	72%	85%	79%	81%			65%			
Overall Allocation %	54%	63%	56%	62%	43%	36%	60%	58%	63%	

7 day	4.95	4.95	5.95	5.95	5.95	5.95	4.95	5	5.99	
wknd	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.49	
sun only	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.49	
Digital Only	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.95	3.49	
7 day	44%	44%	40%	40%	40%	40%	44%	44%	37%	
wknd	47%	47%	47%	47%	47%	47%	47%	47%	44%	
sun only	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%	61%	50%	
Overall Allocation %	51%	51%	49%	49%	49%	49%	51%	51%	44%	

# Attachment B

City/Paper	Avg Percent	Avg # of Subscribers
[REDACTED]	63%	33,550
[REDACTED]	49%	182,647
[REDACTED]	62%	20,043
[REDACTED]	51%	31,861
[REDACTED]	51%	38,709
[REDACTED]	55%	178,404
[REDACTED]	43%	7,381
[REDACTED]	53%	97,172
[REDACTED]	54%	33,766
[REDACTED]	49%	40,145
[REDACTED]	51%	94,120
[REDACTED]	52%	65,591
[REDACTED]	54%	34,675
[REDACTED]	63%	7,826
[REDACTED]	56%	6,956
[REDACTED]	56%	73,021
[REDACTED]	44%	328,531
[REDACTED]	54%	59,656
[REDACTED]	49%	529,999
[REDACTED]	49%	35,300
[REDACTED]	56%	25,305
[REDACTED]	49%	79,327
[REDACTED]	36%	7,677
[REDACTED]	60%	17,887
[REDACTED]	51%	20,927
[REDACTED]	50%	16,964
[REDACTED]	58%	10,089
<b>Weighted Average</b>		50%