



SEN. GEORGE RUNNER (RET.)

MEMBER  
STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION  
**CALIFORNIA'S TAX BOARD**

May 16, 2012

Assembly Member Mike Gatto  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Opposition to AB 404**

Dear Assembly Member Gatto,

I am writing to express my opposition to your Assembly Bill 404.

I understand and share your desire to ensure the fair and equitable access of all taxpayers to their local elected and appointed representatives; however, I believe the proposed solution you have outlined is premature.

As Chair of the State Board of Equalization's Property Tax Committee, I recently sent a letter to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors advising them of the Board's constitutional mandate to ensure that property tax assessments are equitable and uniform throughout the state.

To this end, Board of Equalization staff perform regular and routine surveys of the assessment practices in each county. The Board's oversight is intended to provide the highest level of integrity in property tax assessment in all counties statewide.

A survey of the Los Angeles County Assessor's office is currently in progress. The survey is designed to identify any anomalies or improper practice. In addition, the survey will make recommendations, if necessary, to strengthen internal controls and encourage best practices for the Assessor's office. We anticipate making these conclusions public later this year.

AB 404 proposes a solution to one aspect of what is perceived to be a problem in the Los Angeles County Assessors' office, by requiring tax agents—professionals who assist taxpayers in appealing property tax appraisals—to register as lobbyists. But only the half a dozen or so counties that currently regulate lobbying would be subject to the bill's provisions.

The L.A. County Assessor's Office is currently being investigated by multiple government agencies, including the L.A. County District Attorney, L.A. County Auditor-Controller and State Board of Equalization. These investigations will provide a clearer picture of what happened and what might be done to prevent similar problems in the future.

In the meantime, it's difficult to know which new laws, if any, are needed. I would urge you, therefore, to withdraw this measure until the results of these investigations are made public, and we can ensure that the solutions that are proposed address the true root of any problems that are identified.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Runner', written in a cursive style.

GEORGE RUNNER