



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\***

**BAY AREA ASSESSORS ANNOUNCE NEW LAW TO HELP HOMEOWNERS TO  
AVOID PROPERTY TAX SCAMS**

*\*\*\* SCAM EXAMPLE ATTACHED \*\*\**

**San Francisco** – Assessor-Recorder Phil Ting along with Bay Area Assessors from Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin Counties and Assemblymember Ted Lieu warned homeowners today about misleading and official-looking property tax reduction solicitations and to highlight a new law, Assembly Bill 992, which officially outlaws these fraudulent letters beginning January 1, 2010.

“These con-artists are taking advantage of vulnerable homeowner’s which is not only deplorable but is also criminal. There is no reason for a property owner to pay a fee to a private company for a free service you get from the assessor's office,” said Ting. “We stand here today to ensure that everyone is aware of the free services our offices provide,” Ting continued.

AB 992, a new law authored by Assemblymember Lieu, puts an end to this scam by preventing these miscreants from sending solicitations that look like official government letters that attempt to collect a fee, and in some cases, even threaten a late fee if not acted upon immediately.

“With property values dropping across the state, scammers are preying on unsuspecting homeowners by offering to help lower their property tax bill,” said Assemblymember Lieu. “These unscrupulous companies offer to file property tax reduction requests with the county assessor’s office, in return for an unnecessary fee of several hundred dollars from the homeowner.”

County assessors from across California are being inundated with questions and concerns from property owners who have received misleading mailers. They are urging homeowners to be on the lookout for these mailers and to contact their local assessor’s office directly to properly file for lower assessments.

“During these tough economic times, it is important that local government take additional steps to protect the taxpayer,” said Contra Costa County Assessor Gus Kramer.

“They are bottom dwellers who are feeding upon the increased fears of homeowners stressed out by a declining real estate market and the loss of equity,” said Santa Clara County Assessor Larry Stone.

“These solicitations that mislead the taxpayers and charge a fee for a service that is provided by all assessors at no charge must be stopped,” said Alameda County Assessor Ron Thomsen. “This legislation goes a long way to protect the public.”

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