



WINNETKA NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL

PO Box 3692, Winnetka, CA 91306

www.winnetkanc.com



President	Vice – President	Secretary	Treasurer	Sergeant at Arms
JJ Popowich	Art Sims	Mary Ann Smiley	Erick Lace	Jozef Essavi
Board Members				
Armineh Chelebian	Nina Essavi	Nalini Natarajan	Edesa Aghakha-nmoshabad	Tess Reyes-Dunne
TJ Martens	T. Alan Schweizer	Steve Zeldin		Youth Position

July 14, 2008

Greig Smith
Councilmember, CD 12
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street, Room 405
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Councilmember Smith,

I am contacting you to let you know that the Winnetka Neighborhood Council (WNC) has discussed the Mayor's proposed ½ cent sales tax increase to fund MTA and transportation projects.

Our Board voted unanimously to authorize me to let you know that we do not support any increases in taxes at this time.

We hope that you will understand that this vote does not mean we do not recognize the transportation problems that beset our region. Clearly we have a major need for increased mass transit, increased freeway capacity, and increased investment in upgrading and maintaining our current roads. We certainly want and need to see these issues addressed.

However, the Board wanted me to stress that we are increasingly concerned about how funds are managed within the City and the state. The Board is concerned that any new funds will not be applied to what it has been requested for. Far too often we see tax or fee increases that are co-opted for other uses than what they were intended for.

Last year the Mayor pushed through a trash tax, excuse me fee, on the basis that it would be used for additional police officers. To date we are unaware of any increase in police presence in Winnetka. In fact, we have a brand new police station with no additional police officers to staff it. Where is the money going?

The DWP rate hikes that were recently passed were intended to ensure that the DWP could upgrade infrastructure and ensure that they can continue to provide services to our citizens. Yet there is no assurance that it will be used for that purpose. Our concern is that the funds will be illegally transferred to the City's General Fund or to pay for last year's outrageous 26% pay raises.

This kind of funds management leads us to feel that we simply can't support any more requests for additional revenues at this time. The WNC Board feels that we need to see some concrete, iron clad

language in all future ballot measures that ensures the funds can only be used for the purposes it was requested.


Not only must we see that the funds are used for what they are requested for we also feel we need to see the City, County, and State responsibly manage the funds it has before it requests more. We pay quite a bit in taxes on gasoline which is supposed to be used for our road infrastructure. However, the Los Angeles region sees only a small percentage of those revenues. When will we create an organized and coordinated effort to ensure that we receive an equal and fair share of those funds? We are tired of seeing funds generated in LA continually awarded to the Bay area.

In addition, the Board would like assurances that some of those funds will address the concerns of our community. The Valley is one of the few areas of the City without a real mass transit system. Throughout Los Angeles we see the development of light rail and subway systems. Yet in the Valley we get a single bus system. And while the Orange Line is a huge success by all standards it is still a bus system that is already overtaxed and crowded. We need light rail that runs east to west and can seamlessly interconnect with the other light rail lines. We do not need a subway to the ocean.

Finally, the Board wanted me to stress that now is not the time to raise taxes. Our country is in the midst of a terrible economic mess. We are surrounded by houses in foreclosure. We are beset by astronomical gas prices. We are witnessing bank failures and job losses. At what point do we realize there simply is no more money? Please take a moment to consider that a sales tax has a tremendous impact on all citizens...but even more of an impact on the middle and poor classes. These are the classes that are struggling just to hold on to their jobs and houses. Tax payers are a finite resource and we had better start to conserve that resource.

We encourage you to do everything in your power to ensure that this tax increase proposal fails.

Sincerely,



JJ Popowich
President, WNC



WNC
Celebrating Diversity with Unity
and Dedication to the Community