

# Vehicle tax will not be extended if it does not reap good results

Recently, the Placer County Board of Supervisors was asked to approve a \$1 per year increase in vehicle registration fees in order to establish a multi-jurisdictional auto theft task force.

All five members of your Board of Supervisors voted in favor of the fee, and were summarily taken to task by the Journal when it wrote that the board, "essentially shirked one of their duties to fiscally conservative voters in the county who elected them," Journal editorial, March 30.

First, a quick summary of the issue. Last year in Placer County, 1,053 vehicles were stolen. Though down nearly 200 from the year before, the vehicle theft trend over the last 15 years is definitely on the rise, up nearly 150 percent since 1990.

According to Rick Ward, area commander of the California Highway Patrol, statewide, 247,896 vehicles were stolen in 2006. The estimated total value of the vehicles was \$1.52 billion. Of the vehicles stolen statewide, 90 percent were successfully recovered. However, within Placer County only 76 percent were successfully recovered.

Responding to this trend, Sheriff Ed Bonner, District Attorney Brad Fenocchio and representatives of the CHP and city police departments within the county got together to create a collaborative, multi-jurisdictional task force dedicated to thwarting vehicle thefts. Their premise — criminals don't care about city/county boundaries, so why should we?

So, this august group asked the board to exercise the authority granted to us by the state legislature to impose a county-wide fee of \$1 per vehicle to fund the vehicle theft-deterrent efforts of the task force.

Though supportive of the goals of the task force, and recognizing

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that keeping the crime rate low helps keep property values high, your board was not willing to grant the fee without conditions.

First, we required that the task force report back to the board with statistics showing how Placer County is performing in various aspects relating to vehicle thefts. These may include numbers of vehicles stolen, number recovered and duration of time for recovery, apprehension of perpetrators and successful prosecution and incarceration.

Once the baseline is established, the task force will have to report to the board with the objective levels of improvement to which they are willing to be held in order to determine the success of the program.

Second, the board placed a five-year "sunset" clause on the fee authorization.

In five years, the task force, using the measurable objectives referenced earlier, will have to report back to the board to demonstrate the program's success. At that time, the board will evaluate whether county residents are realizing a benefit that meets or exceeds the additional dollar a year we are paying. If not, the fee goes away.

Objective standards, strict accountability and a requirement that the fee expires if there is not another vote to extend it based on the results of the program — sounds fiscally conservative to me.

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