

Hello, this is Tom Cookman with a Community Comment.

We know that every aspect of California government is dominated by liberals, and now we have a combined tax rate that is the highest in the country. Some states have high property taxes, but no sales tax and a modest income tax or they have a high property tax rate and a reasonable sales tax without any state income tax. Obviously, every state needs revenue, and the legislators juggle these three revenue sources in a combination of ways to generate funds. Unfortunately, California lawmakers have manipulated the system so that today we have high property taxes, high income taxes and a very high sales tax. You would think that all this revenue would create a fiscal situation where all departments would be well-funded with plenty of money left over to help the poor. But, no. Every single department, at every level in our state is operating in the red. In fact, we are billions of dollars in the hole. Are California residents getting better benefits than residents of other states? No. We are near the top in education spending and yet near the bottom in test scores. We spend the most on roads, yet for some reason we have a deteriorating road infrastructure. We are by far the number one state when it comes to compensating our government workforce. The benefit packages we offer our employees is head and shoulders above other states. These lucrative employment packages have been negotiated by the government unions, which have bled the system dry and they better start negotiating sustainable employee benefits before we are bankrupt. People like Madoff are sent to prison for operating a Ponzi scheme, yet our elected officials and the government unions they negotiate with have structured benefit packages that are very similar. This system CANNOT sustain itself. We are on the verge of bankruptcy, and anyone employed by the government should

fear for their pension. Because of extremely high taxes, there is a mass exodus of businesses leaving California, which puts even more pressure on our budget. Instead of trying to solve this fiscal disaster, our politicians just think of ways to increase revenue. They are devising numerous new taxes disguised as fees and permits to try and shore up their deficit. One such tax masquerading as a fee is the CALFIRE fee that is \$150 per parcel. Property outside the city limits meeting certain criteria, which most parcels do, will receive a \$150 bill from the Franchise Tax Board for every habitable dwelling. If your parcel is protected by another fire fighting agency like Humboldt Fire District, this fee will be \$115. Another fee for ponds is being considered. Each pond would be subject to a \$100 fee. This is how our legislatures operate: What can I do to squeeze the last penny out of the taxpayer's pocket? A fee for a pond? Seriously? I don't have a pond, but I do have an area that fills up in the winter. Would that be defined as a pond? Would I have to pay for a portion of the year when it's filled? Or maybe some idiot lawmaker might consider a large mud puddle a pond? Yes, that is how ridiculous it's getting. I already am taxed for fire protection, and now I am required to pay more because I live outside the city limits. Why am I paying for two agencies? Isn't that like double taxation? Oh, that's right. One is called a fee. Unfortunately our only hope is at the ballot box, but California doesn't seem smart enough to make changes there. If we don't start saying "enough" and "no" to our liberal politicians, they will continue to pass new taxes – sneakily defined as fees. We have short-sighted legislators taxing us to death, businesses set up shop in other states, and the end result is California files bankruptcy. This has been Tom Cookman with a Community Comment