

Republican Perspective
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WE'RE NUMBER ONE!

Don't get too excited CAL loyalists, this is not about your beloved Golden Bears football team! It's the story about how our Governor and Legislature decided to take more money out of our pockets under the guise of improving California's roads. With the passage of a \$0.12/gallon increase, California now has the highest gas tax in the nation totaling nearly \$0.71/gallon.

To raise a projected \$52.4 billion over 10 years, changes to taxes and fees include:

- A 12-cent increase in the gasoline excise tax (40% increase)
- A 20-cent increase in the diesel excise tax
- A 5.75 percent increase in the diesel sales tax
- A new vehicle fee, which will annually charge drivers between \$25 and \$175, depending on the value of the vehicle
- A \$100 annual fee on zero-emission vehicles (Tesla tax)

Californians already pay one of the highest gas taxes in the nation and yet our roads are amongst the worst. Why? In business, there is no substitute for good management. The same holds true for government. Democratic politicians simply are not good stewards of public monies.

Given that Californians pay about 40% more in gas taxes and fees than the national average (prior to this tax increase), it is only reasonable to expect that the quality of roads should be significantly better than in other parts of the country. About \$4.5 billion to \$5 billion a year in fuel taxes finds its way to Sacramento. That's not including weight fees, registration fees or local sales taxes.

According to the California Legislative Analyst's Office, the state's failing cap-and-trade program adds an additional 12 cents per gallon to fuel costs. That's an additional \$2 billion a year, much of which has been directed to the high-speed rail boondoggle. Not one cent has gone toward fixing roads.

100% of the sales tax on diesel fuel is currently diverted to public transit projects, yet BART needs more funding. If we spent this money on our roads instead, we'd have an additional \$620 million each year for repairs. The LA Times reports

that nearly \$1 billion is collected annually from truck weight fees and all of it is diverted to the general fund.

In 2002, voters passed Proposition 42, a constitutional amendment meant to ensure that motor vehicle sales taxes be used for transportation purposes. Voters followed up in 2006 with Proposition 1A, because politicians found loopholes to spend these dollars on other projects. Did you catch that? The Legislature found loopholes in Prop 42 to thwart the will of the people.

State revenues have grown by nearly 50 percent since 2008, from \$83 billion to \$122 billion today. You would think some of this revenue would go to road maintenance and repair instead of increasing taxes.

At Congressman Mark DeSaulnier's recent townhall, he offered that 25% of Californians are considered to be at the poverty level. That's nearly 10 million people. Think of the impact this gas tax increase has to the working poor. Most need their vehicles to get to jobs and they cannot afford the luxury of an electric vehicle. Progressives moan about the haves and have-nots, yet their policies make matters worse. They continue to make California unaffordable to the poor, lower and middle-class.

The Republican caucus advanced its own proposal, carried by Assemblyman Vince Fong, R-Bakersfield. Assembly Bill 496 would pay for road repairs without raising taxes by redirecting billions of dollars from such sources as vehicle sales taxes and truck-weight fees to road repairs. AB 496 was not the Republicans only effort. For the past two years Republicans proposed a series of bills to address road repair without raising taxes. These proposals were not even given a hearing.

Why did Republican proposals not see the light of day? Because they would have required Democrats to address the institutional dysfunction at Caltrans and its powerfull unions. They would have required more accountability from Caltrans and required the Legislature to revisit its spending priorities. In other words, these proposals would have required Democrats to do their job.

Democrat Assemblyman, Rudy Salas voted against the huge gas tax increase. Under Democrat rule, such a vote cannot stand. Mr. Salas was stripped of his chairmanship of the Assembly Business and Professions Committee, which handles consumer regulations, occupational licensing and product labeling bills. Very progressive.

As for CAL, they just cancelled a scheduled speech by conservative syndicated columnist Ann Coulter, for fear of violence. Hmm...wonder if they will ever cancel a speech from a radical Leftist? GO YOU BEARS!