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STATE FINAL 50 CENTS

Flood protection tax detailed

Assessments could triple for some with voter OK; officials point to benefits.

By Matt Weiser
STAFF WRITER

Some Sacramento homeowners will pay as much as three times more for flood protection under a proposed property tax hike that goes to voters in March.

Despite the increase, the assessment for most people will remain under \$100 per year.

The details are part of a consultant's report being released today by the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, which said in November that it would seek the higher tax.

The report yields the first glimpse of how much it will cost individual prop-

erty owners for improved flood protection. The SAFCA board of directors will take public comments on the report at its meeting Jan. 26.

Residents affected by the plan will soon get a newsletter from the agency detailing the assessment plan. The mailing label will include each property owner's parcel number, which can be typed into a tool on SAFCA's

LEVEE ASSESSMENT
Sacramento flood officials will send out a newsletter that includes each homeowner's parcel number on the mailing label. That number can be entered into the calculator on a Web site to find out the proposed levee-improvement assessment. To find the site, see www.sacbee.com/leak. For example, Sacramento Mayor Heather Fargo's assessment would almost double.



SACRAMENTO MAYOR HEATHER FARGO
Barron Creek Creek assessment parcel number: 223-0622-003
Current Assessment: Dist 2: \$80.12 per year
New Assessment Dist 4: \$151.60 per year
Change: +\$71.57 per year

China destroys satellite in space

U.S. slams the action, which raises fears of a space arms race.

By Marc Kaufman and Dasha Linzer
WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — The Chinese military used a ground-based missile to destroy one of its aging satellites orbiting more than 200 miles in space last week — a high-stakes test demonstrating China's ability to target regions of space that are home to U.S. spy satellites and space-based missile-defense systems.

The test of anti-satellite technology is believed to be the first of its kind in two decades by any nation and raised concerns about the vulnerability of U.S. satellites and a possible space arms race.

China's action drew sharp protests from other nations with satellite programs — a predictable response that experts said demonstrated a willingness to use increasingly sophisticated weapons when it comes to space, which Beijing considers a key part of the push to modernize its military and increase its ability to compete in high-tech warfare.

"The U.S. believes China's development and testing of such weapons is inconsistent with the spirit of cooperation that both countries espouse in the civil space area," National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe said Thursday. "We and other countries have expressed our concern regarding this action to the Chinese."

A spokesman at the Chinese Embassy said he had no information about the anti-satellite test.

In addition to introducing a renewed military dimension to space, China's destruction of its satellite created a large "space cloud" that could seriously damage other satellites in orbit nearby, and possibly even spacecraft on their way to the moon or beyond. Analysts said that, based on

FAT TO GO

Sacramento County among state's worst in food study



Fast food is abundant at Marcoro Avenue and Villa Vista Way. A group advocating healthy eating wants easier access to nutritious food.

Vendors of fast fare vastly outstrip healthier food stores, and obesity rates reflect it.

By Dorsey Griffith
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

Sacramento County has nearly six times as many fast-food restaurants and convenience stores as it does supermarkets and produce vendors, helping explain why the bulge of the bulge in a hard-fought war.

A new study of retail food outlets in California put Sacramento County second only to San Bernardino County in its lopsided ratio of healthy food markets vs. those offering bucket-sized sodas, or bacon-draped double cheeseburgers.

Researchers hope the data will prompt city and county planners and policymakers to consider ways to better balance the placement of retail food outlets when approving new development projects.

They say offering financial incentives to vendors, for example, may entice them to expand their nutritious offerings.

"We are not saying let's close down all the McDonald's and 7-Elevens," said Harold Goldstein, executive director of the Davis-based California Center for Public Health Advocacy, which conducted the study.

Calculating the 'food environment'

A new study compared the number of different types of retail food vendors in California's most populous areas to produce a "total food environment index," a measurement of the availability of nutritious food.

County	Food environment index	Adult obesity rate (2001)
San Bernardino	5.72	23.7%
Sacramento	5.66	21.4%
Fresno	5.34	26.6%
Orange	5.13	14.9%
Solano	5.08	22.8%
Ken	4.87	25.4%
Sonoma	4.79	25.2%
Contra Costa	4.68	20.5%
Alameda	4.63	20.5%
Alameda	4.61	17.9%
Los Angeles	4.60	19.8%
Tulare	4.42	24.3%
Santa Clara	4.32	15.4%
San Diego	4.20	16.2%
STATE AVERAGE	4.18	19.1%
San Joaquin	4.03	26.6%
Ventura	3.98	15.6%
Placer	3.85	11.9%
Placer	3.84	15.7%
Butte	3.02	18.1%
Santa Barbara	2.99	16.8%
San Mateo	2.79	13.9%
Sonoma	2.52	13.9%
Ploemery	2.14	25.5%
San Luis Obispo	2.01	15.7%

Measure would punish spanking

Bill would make state first to ban swatting of children under 4.

By Jim Sanders
RECAPITOL BUREAU

Spank your child, go to jail? California would become the first state to explicitly ban spanking for children younger than 4 under legislation to be introduced next week.

Slapping, whacking, whacking or hitting also would be outlawed.

Assemblyman Sally Lieber, a Mountain View Democrat who is crafting the measure, said corporal punishment victimizes helpless children and contributes to a society "addicted to violence."

"The only thing a child learns by being beaten is that it's OK to beat or dominate children or animals that are smaller," he said.

"To my mind, there's no amount of physical force that's appropriate on a child 3 years old or younger," Lieber said.

CRISIS LIEBER'S PRO-
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Governor: No-tax vow still valid

By Kevin Yamamura
RECAPITOL BUREAU

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger defended his health care plan Thursday against criticism that he broke his fundamental campaign pledge of no new taxes by forcing businesses and physicians to give a share of their revenue to the state.

In a 30-minute interview with The Bee, the Republican governor insisted his proposed change on certain groups is not a tax because the money collected is dedicated to health care rather than other state expenditures. He also

FAT TO GO; SACRAMENTO COUNTY AMONG STATE'S WORST IN FOOD STUDY

Dorsey Griffith, Sacramento Bee, January 19, 2007

Sacramento County has nearly six times as many fast-food restaurants and convenience stores as it does supermarkets and produce vendors, helping explain why the battle of the bulge is a hard-fought war. A new study of retail food outlets in California put Sacramento County second only to San Bernardino County in its lopsided ratio of healthy food markets vs. those offering bucket-sized sodas, or bacon-draped double cheeseburgers.

Researchers hope the data will prompt city and county planners and policymakers to consider ways to better balance the placement of retail food outlets when approving new development projects. They say offering financial incentives to vendors, for example, may entice them to expand their nutritious offerings.

"We are not saying let's close down all the McDonald's and 7-Elevens," said Harold Goldstein, executive director of the Davis-based California Center for Public Health Advocacy, which conducted the study. "We're saying let's make sure cities and counties make purposeful choices in their zoning and use of redevelopment funds to make sure we have access to healthy food."

Taking stock of where food retailers locate is important, Goldstein said, in light of recent studies in some cities that found higher obesity and obesity-related mortality rates near higher concentrations of fast-food restaurants. "What people eat is influenced by the environment in which they live," Goldstein said. "We wanted to know what it looked like in California." The researchers used commercial data sources and geographic information system software to do the study. They constructed what they called a "retail food environment index," or RFEI, by adding the number of convenience stores and fast-food outlets and then dividing that sum by the number of supermarkets and produce vendors, including farmers markets.

What they found was a variation in the RFEIs for various communities. While Sacramento County's score was among the highest, at 5.66, Santa Cruz County scored just 1.84, the lowest measured. The city of Sacramento came in fifth among 13 large cities, with a score of 4.97. The county data roughly correspond to county adult obesity rates reported in 2001 by the state Department of Health Services. With a 21 percent adult obesity rate, Sacramento County is home to some of the largest people in California. Santa Cruz County, on the other hand, has a 15 percent obesity rate.

The findings in Sacramento County didn't surprise Melissa Guajardo, who promotes healthy communities on behalf of the Sacramento-based Health Education Council. "Our frustration has been that we go into low-income neighborhoods where they have histories of poor health -- often diet-related -- and we talk about eating healthier and getting more physically active," Guajardo said. "What we haven't been able to address is their ability to find the food they need to eat and want to eat locally." Guajardo points to the south Sacramento neighborhood of Avondale-Glen Elder, where there are plenty of convenience stores but little readily accessible fresh produce.

One such market, Fast Stop Food Store on the corner of Fruitridge Road and Wilkinson Street, is stocked with plenty of snacks, liquor, and household items but carries a limited menu of healthy food options. Still, Fast Stop serves a steady flow of customers, many of whom live in apartments next door. One of the regulars is 84-year-old Mattie Wiggins, who lives just around the corner. Every day, Wiggins makes her way to the store, assisted by a cane, to buy items for herself and her 60-year-old diabetic and disabled son. On Thursday, Wiggins picked up cigarettes, beer, and a package of all-beef bologna -- a snack for her son. She said if the store had fresh oranges or pears, she'd buy them. "They don't have that," she said, "just in the can. Maybe I don't want it in the can." Wiggins said she makes it to the supermarket, seven blocks away, only occasionally.

Sacramento County Health Officer Dr. Glennah Trochet said the research adds to a growing understanding of environmental influences on eating habits. "I am not advocating restricting the numbers of fast-food outlets or convenience stores," Trochet said. "But state and local policymakers should make it as easy to find healthy foods as it is to find fast foods." Sen. Elaine Alquist, D-Santa Clara, plans to introduce a bill that would provide state grants to small retailers to help them expand their healthy food stock.

But George Whalin, a retail management consultant in San Marcos, doubts that government meddling could dramatically influence the retail food landscape, since demographics and economics drive business decisions.

"Retail is simple," Whalin said. "I don't want to be there. If they can't generate enough revenue, they will leave."