



Taxes Matter

Tax Day—April 15. Instead of the usual images associated with this day, let's think about what our tax dollars do. We—as a country, state, local community—decide what our priorities are. We decide every time we vote, every time we write a letter to our elected officials, every time we attend a community forum.

Taxes matter. Our past decisions—and tax dollars—created the productive society that we live in. These past decisions built the interstate highway system, libraries, schools, and the court system that we use today. Clean air and safe water are only possible because we have chosen to create the regulatory systems that protect us. Our tax dollars **today** will help maintain these systems and pay the salaries of the men and women who fight our fires and the teachers in our schools who are training the workers of the future. The dollars we pay today build the communities we want to live in tomorrow.

Currently many businesses in California pay lower taxes because they benefit from tax breaks put in place just for them. These businesses benefit from the things that taxes pay for: our roads, our police and fire protection, the workforce trained in our California schools and colleges. While we hear that these tax breaks help provide new jobs, there are no procedures in place to require these businesses to keep track of just how many jobs they create with the extra money they have because of the tax breaks. Accountability requirements tied to tax breaks would allow the public to see how the companies spend the money that would otherwise go to pay for public programs.

We all benefit from the things our taxes buy. We should all pay our share of the bill. We may not need to be happy about paying our taxes, but we can acknowledge the good things that these taxes do.

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