



MALIA M. COHEN
CHAIR
STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

February 23, 2022

TO: Members of the Board of Equalization

FROM: Malia M. Cohen, Chair

RE: Board of Equalization Board Meeting, February 23, 2022, L.1.b.
Discussion regarding Board of Equalization Website Translation

Board discussion and possible action related to installing in the interim a Google Translate icon and associated disclaimer to the Board Member and State Board of Equalization (BOE) websites to ensure taxpayer accessibility in various languages.

The purpose of this agenda item is to offer the Board an interim solution to provide California taxpayers the option to view information on our website in various languages while the Executive Director determines a longer-term solution.

Background

The members of this Board represent a diversity of taxpayers with a broad range of languages. This Board has highlighted the need to make the information available on our website, along with our print material, forms, and publications available in a variety of languages to assist our taxpayers and others who visit our website.

Due to re-occurring natural disasters, the pandemic, and the passage of Proposition 19, the importance of taxpayers' ability to access and understand crucial tax-related information in their preferred language has become even more significant.

By providing a language translation option to visitors of the BOE website, the Board is continuing with its property tax modernization efforts and ensuring that property tax-related information is available to stakeholders in multiple languages.

Google Translate is a translation service developed by Google to translate text, documents, and websites from one language into another. Google Translate supports 109 languages at various levels and continues to add additional languages periodically. The service is used by businesses, government, and nonprofit organizations. Traditionally, Google offered this service at a cost. However, during the pandemic, Google provided a complementary service option to government agencies and nonprofits with the goal of increasing the availability of critical information in various languages.

According to Google representatives, this complementary service option will sunset in the near future.

Google is now offering a version of Google Translate using Google Cloud. This version provides robust translations and customizations and is not a free service.

Many State of California government agencies and Constitutional offices' websites include a Google Translate service. Several of the state agencies and offices are listed below:

- Department of Child Support Services
- Department of General Services
- Department of Insurance
- Department of Technology
- CA.gov
- Employment Development Department
- Franchise Tax Board
- Office of the Attorney General
- Office of Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
- Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Many of these websites also provide a disclaimer to mitigate any liabilities associated with potential mistranslations.

Many of the State of California websites that do not include a Google Translate service offer other sources of pre-translated materials on their website.

Recommendation

In order to determine whether the Google Translate service is appropriate for the State Board of Equalization, I suggest that this Board ask the Executive Director to explore the feasibility, and pros and cons of this interim solution, including costs, risks, issues, and any other implementation factors important to making a decision.