



SEN. GEORGE RUNNER (RET.)

VICE CHAIR
STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
CALIFORNIA'S TAX BOARD

March 30, 2015

Senator Robert Hertzberg, Chair
Senate Committee on Governance and Finance
State Capitol, Room 408
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SENATE BILL 250 (GAINES) – SRAs: FIRE PREVENTION FEES • SPONSOR •

Dear Senator Hertzberg,

I am pleased to sponsor Board of Equalization-supported Senate Bill 250, which increases the amount of time allowed for payment of the Fire Prevention Fee from 30 days to 60 days from the date of assessment.

Created by the Legislature and Governor as part of the 2011 Budget, the Fire Prevention Fee charges property owners \$152.33 for each habitable structure located in a State Responsibility Area (SRA), with a \$35 reduction in the fee if the structure is located within the boundaries of a local fire protection district.

More than 700,000 Californians receive an annual bill, with just over half of them located in the rural areas of my district. Over the years, many constituents have complained that many factors distinctive to rural living prevent them from receiving their bill in a timely manner to meet the 30-day deadline. For example, rural taxpayers may receive their mail through a post office box that is not located at their homes. The 30-day deadline attaches to the postmark on the mailing. If these taxpayers check mail only once per week at a location several miles from home, they have 23 days to understand the bill and make payment by the deadline; that timeframe is insufficient to protect their rights and encourage compliance.

The goal of SB 250 is to increase compliance. The BOE enjoys a high compliance rate with respect to traditional tax and fee payers, most of whom are businesses. However, Fire Prevention Fee payers are not familiar with the BOE. While most BOE-administered tax and fee programs require payment 30 days from the date on the bill, this is a unique fee that touches homeowners unfamiliar with the BOE or its policies. Indeed, this fee is more similar to property tax bills, which are sent to both individuals and businesses, and which allow more than 30 days to pay.

Increasing the payment due date of the Fire Prevention Fee from 30 to 60 days will ensure greater compliance with the law by giving all owners of habitable structures in an SRA more time to receive and pay their bills. It will also give taxpayers more time appeal their bills. For these reasons, I am pleased to sponsor SB 250 and ask for your support when it is heard before your committee on April 8.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G. Runner".

GEORGE RUNNER
1st District