



May 9, 2014

This week the Senate approved a split roll parcel tax bill which would allow more than 1,000 California school districts to impose unlimited tax increases on commercial property owners, including unimproved agricultural land. Even though [SB 1021](#) (Lois Wolk, D-Davis) states that a “qualified special tax” may include a tax imposed at a lower rate on unimproved property, Farm Bureau has little confidence that school districts will choose to do so. Therefore, we are strongly opposed. We know very well that taxing entities, especially school districts, will not behave in a fair and reasonable manner when it comes to imposing per parcel special taxes.

Prior to the adoption of a Farm Bureau-sponsored bill in 1998, numerous school districts sought to impose parcel taxes on agricultural and timber parcels that were not legally severable, i.e., assessor parcels numbers (APNs). Districts would impose the taxes at a modest per parcel rate, e.g., \$10 per parcel, but the tax would be levied on APNs thus unfairly forcing rural landowners to pay multiple per parcel charges on fictitious assessor parcels on unimproved land. The scheme was simple: make the tax inconsequential on a per parcel basis so that residents in town would vote to approve the tax even though it gouged rural landowners who would be out voted.

SB 1021 would once again allow school districts to impose split roll parcel taxes. We have no doubt that districts will resort to their old tactics of catering to residential voters while providing no exemption for unimproved agricultural or timber parcels even though the taxes fund people-related services, in this case schools.

The passage of SB 1021 was essentially a party-line vote. The measure advances to the Assembly. The roll call on SB 1021 was as follows: Ayes: **Beall, Block, Corbett, De León, DeSaulnier, Evans, Hancock, Hernandez, Hill, Hueso, Jackson, Lara, Leno, Lieu, Liu, Mitchell, Monning, Padilla, Pavley, Steinberg, and Wolk**; Noes: Anderson, Berryhill, Cannella, **Correa**, Fuller, Gaines, **Galgiani**, Huff, Knight, Morrell, Nielsen, **Torres**, Vidak, Walters, and Wyland; Not Voting: **Roth**; Suspended: **Calderon, Wright, and Yee**. (Democratic Senators in bold.)

[AB 2185](#) (Susan Eggman, D-Stockton), which is trying to improve honeybee access to forage on state owned lands, was placed on the Assembly Appropriations Committee’s suspense file this week due to its state’s costs. AB 2185 would require the Department of Fish and Wildlife and CalTrans to encourage apiculture on the lands they own and requires that when they are updating land use plans they look to include apiculture in those plans. CFBF supports AB 2185, which will be decided upon when the Appropriations Committee takes up its suspense file later this month.

A measure that would allow farmers and ranchers to register small livestock stockponds to also be registered for small irrigation use passed out of the Assembly on consent. [AB 1905](#) (Luis Alejo, D-Watsonville) would improve water user's opportunities to develop economically viable and ecologically sustainable water supplies by allowing small livestock stockponds to also be registered for small irrigation use. Current law allows water users to utilize a single facility (pond) for both small irrigation use and small domestic use, but does not allow utilization of a single facility for small irrigation use and a small livestock stockpond. The measure is sponsored and supported by Farm Bureau.

[SB 1250](#) (Ben Hueso, D-San Diego) was amended to increase the total authorization for issuance of general obligation bonds from \$9.45 to 10.15 billion. Amendments included an additional \$350 million for local and regional water conveyance projects, \$250 million in a new Chapter 12 for water conservation and \$100 million in a new Chapter 13 for local and regional storage projects that would not have otherwise qualified in the Chapter 8 storage section of the measure. SB 1250 includes \$900 million for clean, safe and reliable drinking water, \$1.3 billion for protecting rivers, lakes, streams and watersheds, \$1.35 billion for water supply reliability and drought preparedness, \$2.25 billion for delta sustainability, \$500 million for groundwater sustainability, \$500 million for water recycling, \$250 million for water conservation and \$3.1 billion continuously appropriated for new water storage. Farm Bureau supports.

[AB 1331](#) (Anthony Rendon, D-Lakewood) that would authorize the issuance of \$8 billion in general obligation bonds in five separate categories was approved 5-2 in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee. The five categories include \$1 billion for Water Quality and Clean and Safe Drinking Water, \$1.5 billion for Protecting Rivers, Lakes, Streams and Watersheds, \$2 billion for Climate Change Preparedness for Regional Security, \$1 billion for Delta Sustainability, and \$2.5 billion for Water Storage. It passed out of the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee in March with hostile amendments that removed continuous appropriation language for storage projects. Farm Bureau opposes.

[AB 2453](#) (Katcho Achadjian, R-San Luis Obispo) would authorize the formation of the Paso Robles Basin Water District. The measure would establish the district, its boundaries, the composition of its board of directors and method of electing its board of directors by landowners and registered voters. AB 2453 was approved 6-1 in the Assembly Local Government Committee. Farm Bureau has not yet positioned on the bill, but has been seeking input from the County Farm Bureau and others in the region.

A measure that would authorize the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency (FCGMA) to inspect groundwater wells within its boundaries was approved 27-8 by the Senate. [SB 988](#) (Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara) would authorize the FCGMA to inspect wells within its boundaries, with the consent of the operator, for compliance with or enforcement of the Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency Act. If the operator refuses access, the measure provides the agency with authority to seek an inspection warrant. Farm Bureau supports.

[AB 1660](#) (Luis Alejo, D-Salinas) that clarifies that an action taken by an employer to comply with federal immigration law is not a violation of California law was approved 50-17 by the Assembly. AB 60, which became law in 2013, requires the Department of Motor Vehicles to issue driving privilege cards to persons who cannot furnish the requisite documentation to obtain a regular driver's license. AB 60 also prohibited discrimination under California law against people using a driving privilege card. Farm Bureau supports AB 1660.

[AB 1897](#) by Assembly Labor & Employment Committee Chairman Roger Hernandez (D -West Covina) is a California Labor Federation-sponsored bill that will impose joint liability on a “client employer” for the Labor Code violations of any “labor contractor”. Hernandez’ bill would impose joint liability for any situation where a host employer receives the labor or services of any contractor in the course of normal business. AB 1897 is not specific to any particular industry and is very broad in scope. It was placed on the Assembly Appropriations Committee Suspense File. Farm Bureau and a broad coalition of employer groups are opposed.

[AB 2095](#) (Don Wagner, R-Irvine) would have allowed employers to recover attorneys’ fees in a civil claim related to employee wage statements required by the California Labor Code in which the employer prevails and the court finds the action was brought in bad faith. Organized labor and employee advocates argued that allowing employers to recover fees would be a disincentive to employees’ seeking relief under the Labor Code’s wage statement requirements. AB 2095 failed passage 3-4 in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.