

El Dorado County joins fight against fire fee

The El Dorado County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to join the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Association class-action lawsuit seeking to overturn the state fire fee.

“Hundreds of residents have contacted the county to voice their frustration about the fire tax,” Supervisor John Knight said in a press release. “The Board of Supervisors can’t sit idly by while the state is running a legalized extortion scheme on rural residents.”

El Dorado County residents living in the “state responsibility area” began receiving fire fee bills in late September. The fee is \$150 per habitable structure within the state responsibility area. A \$35 discount applies if the structure is also within the boundaries of a local fire protection district, like Lake Valley.

The county government received bills for five pieces of property including sites purchased for road right of way, the Perks Court homeless facility, residential property adjacent to the Headington Road corporation yard, and the Union Mine disposal site. The county filed a petition for redetermination, and submitted a letter to state officials indicating the county’s payment of the fee was provided under protest.

The county’s letter argues that the fire fee is actually a tax which requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature. The bill imposing the fire fee garnered only a simple majority of votes.

“For this reason,” the letter states, “the county of El Dorado pays the Fire Prevention Fee under protest and reserves all rights to pursue a refund of said amount through judicial

action or otherwise.”

It is expected that the HJTA complaint against the fee will be amended in the coming weeks to add additional plaintiffs, including El Dorado County.