



American GI Forum of California

Willie Galvan, State Commander
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The American GI Forum celebrates 50 years of service to veterans!
"Veterans Helping Veterans"

September 8, 2009

Mr. Gerald Parsky, Chair
Commission on the 21st Century Economy
c/o State of California Department of Finance
915 L Street, 8th Floor
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Mr. Parsky:

Our organization is dedicated to meeting the needs and improving the lives of Hispanic veterans. Our veterans face unique physical, economic and societal challenges once they conclude their military service and return to civilian life. We hope your Commission will not add further to their burdens by promoting higher fuel taxes.

Many Hispanic veterans are challenged by service-related disabilities, limited employment and job-training opportunities and the lack of a strong support system. The recent economic recession has been particularly hard on them as jobs and opportunities have dwindled.

Our organization sees first-hand the difficulties our veterans are facing just to pay the rent, feed themselves and their families and pay for essential medical care not covered by insurance or state and federal programs. Higher gas taxes would translate to even more hardship.

The stated purpose of one such tax the Commission is reportedly considering, the "pollution tax," is to raise fuel taxes so they will be reflected in higher prices at the pump, encouraging conservation.

For these veterans, buying gasoline is not a luxury – it's a necessary expense that allows them to get to work, or to job interviews, or to job training, or to health care services for them and their families. Their circumstances have already forced them to conserve as much as they possibly can. Any increases in fuel taxes or in the price of gasoline at the pump will create severe hardship for them.

We hope the Tax Commission will say no to the severe burdens that fuel tax increases will impose on our veterans, their families, and the state's economy.

Sincerely,

State Commander, American GI Forum of California