



The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

March 2007

Stop Getting Overcharged at the Checkout

Jacob says County needs your help to keep retail scanners on the money

You might never notice officials from the County Department of Agriculture Weights and Measures in the places where you shop. But the inspectors are there, making sure that your gallon of gas is, indeed, a full gallon and that the amount you're charged for groceries matches the prices advertised on your grocer's shelf.

It's been more than three years since Supervisor Jacob partnered with inspectors to alert consumers to a shocking problem at many local check stands.

Back then, the region was surprised to learn that retail scanners— those electronic devices that automatically detect the price of the items we purchase— were overcharging us about half of the time we make purchases. Collectively, San Diegans were overpaying by about \$104 million every year.

To tackle the overcharges, Supervisor Jacob asked that stores guilty of frequent overcharges be required to post public notices of failed inspections. She also asked that consumer rights information be posted at scanner locations throughout the region.

Supervisor Jacob's changes, coupled

with new State laws designed to protect consumers, have led to stepped up inspections along with warnings and information posted at stores that overcharge. Still, overcharges remain a problem.

Recent County data shows that about 50 percent of inspections still result in overcharges. And, the ratio of overcharges to undercharges has stayed the same, at three-and-a-half to one.

It is estimated that San Diegans still are being overcharged by more than \$100 million annually!

The County isn't sitting back. It takes these overcharges seriously and levied \$85,000 in civil penalties against about 250 businesses in the last two years, while 178 locations were required to post a "Notice of Penalty for Failed Inspections" at entrances.

Whether it's innocent human error behind the overcharges or something more sinister, like a store hoping to escape detection, the County needs your continued help to find and hold chronic violators accountable.

Under the law, consumers should see an informational notice posted at every scanner location. That notice states that buyers are entitled to pay no more than the advertised price and that buyers immediately should inform store management of price discrepancies. That notice also lists two important resources that can help you ensure



Overcharged at the Checkout?
Make sure your next receipt matches the price on the shelf.

Serving the Cities of:
El Cajon
La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
Tecate
Tierra del Sol
Vallecitos
Wynola

Serving the Indian Reservations of:
Barona
Campo
Cosmit
Cuyapaipe
Inaja
Jamul
La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
Sycuan
Viejas



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that you pay only what you should. By phone and via the web, you can stop overcharges.

The Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures'

website— redesigned to be more user-friendly— lets consumers file complaints and get information about scanner violations. The toll free number 1-800-TRUESCAN works too.

About a quarter of all customer complaints are received through the website. Customers who used it told the



County they were aware businesses may face fines for overcharges, an indication that consumer rights information may be paying off.

Late last year, the County took another step to curtail overcharges. It designed two new educational brochures now being circulated to targeted audiences.

The "Guide for the Consumer" is being handed out at consumer awareness events while the "Guide to Price Accuracy for the Retailer" is being disseminated to merchants during routine scanner inspections.

Never one to get ripped off, Supervisor Jacob continues to keep

an eye on scanner accuracy issues, including monitoring for State legislation that could help keep prices right here in San Diego County.

To report scanner violations or learn more about scanners visit:

www.sdcawm.org

**You can also call:
1-888-TRUESCAN**

Sunrise Powerlink Opponents Turning Up the Criticism

Officials from the California Public Utilities Commission got an earful last month during a handful of public meetings on the Sunrise Powerlink Proposal. The CPUC, which partnered with the Federal Bureau of Land Management to host the scoping meetings, is to be commended for holding the meetings in Ramona, Santa Ysabel, Alpine, Pine Valley and other communities.

Residents, including Supervisor Jacob, took full advantage of the opportunity to register their dismay over the project. The 120-mile long controversial transmission line has drawn fire from those who question its need and its route through pristine lands.

"SDG&E continues to obfuscate on another key area of justification for Sunrise: the area of reliability," Supervisor Jacob told State and Federal regulators in written scoping comments.

"SDG&E says Sunrise is needed to keep the lights on in our region, but, by its very nature as an out-of-county transmission line, Sunrise curiously turns to faraway sources to ensure reliability. How SDG&E equates greater reliability with a 120 mile line that carries imported power through landscape prone to catastrophic wildfire is simply beyond me," Supervisor Jacob wrote. "Why not focus on in-basin generation?"



Delight to Blight: Giant towers would destroy the beauty of pristine areas like the Santa Ysabel Valley.

What's New?

Court says Red Cross right to show former leader the door

In the beginning, it was a small disagreement about funds the San Diego Chapter of the American Red Cross raised for victims of the 2001 Alpine Fire.

After 9-11, the dispute progressed to a battle over the entire organization's fundraising methods and called into question the leadership abilities of Dodie Rotherham, then chief administrative officer of the local chapter. The flap even caught the attention of Mike Wallace at television's "60 Minutes."

At long last, the saga is over. This month, a judge ruled that the local chapter had good cause to fire Rotherham back in 2002 and ended the \$3 million wrongful termination suit she brought against the chapter.

Supervisor Jacob, named as a possible witness in the case for her pointed criticism of Rotherham after the Alpine Fire, was especially pleased.

"Rotherham's suit was the height of arrogance to me," Jacob said of the ruling. "Right up until the bitter end, she refused to own up to her failed and tragic decision. Thankfully, the judge recognized the ridiculousness of her claims."

Coffee and Conversation

Got any ideas to make your neighborhood a better place? Join Supervisor Jacob at a casual community coffee.

Friday, April 27, 2007
9:00 a.m.

Guy B. Woodward Museum,
645 Main Street
Ramona



Innovative new tool stops drunk drivers

It is a breath of life—literally.

A new device helps keep roadways safer by requiring convicted drunk drivers to pass a breathalyzer test each time they turn the ignition key. At the request of Supervisor Jacob, the County is lending its support for a bill (SB 177) that would put the devices into action.

As a member of the MADD advisory board, Supervisor Jacob knows that there is no such thing as a drunk driving "accident."

People who knowingly get behind the wheel while intoxicated knowingly endanger the lives of others. Tragically, two people die each week on San Diego roadways in alcohol-related crashes. Supervisor Jacob believes these innovative new devices may help to save those lives!

West Nile Virus still a threat

It's that time again: time to prepare for West Nile Virus. The unpleasant illness is spread by infected mosquitoes and causes flu-like symptoms.

In severe cases, it can be deadly. The County Department of Environmental Health recently confirmed the first dead bird infected with West Nile Virus this year and is urging residents to start controlling mosquito breeding grounds now. If you have standing water around your home, get rid of it. Horse troughs, fountains and ponds can be stocked with special fish to help out. Learn more at:

www.SDFightTheBite.com



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We hope to hear from you soon!

March

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