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PRESS RELEASE
For immediate release

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DON'T PAY FOR A FREE SERVICE

It has come to Assessor Dan Goodwin's attention that property owners in Ventura County are receiving cleverly worded solicitations from private companies offering to provide services, for a fee, that the Ventura County Assessor provides free of charge. Particularly disturbing to the Assessor is the number of property-savvy individuals who have misunderstood the unofficial status of these solicitors. "I am always concerned when private companies use questionable tactics to obtain fees from unsuspecting property owners," Assessor Goodwin explained.

These solicitations are coming under a variety of business names, most claiming to act as a homeowner's agent to guarantee a lower property tax bill. They claim to guarantee an assessment reduction (with the caveat they will refund the service fee if they cannot do so) and imply specialized knowledge of required regulations. In truth, most of the solicited homeowners are already scheduled for a reduction by the Assessor. These companies are not affiliated with any governmental agencies, and homeowners do not need to be represented by them to request a Prop 8 Decline in Value reduction.

Per Assessor Goodwin, "You can work directly with the Assessor's Office, at no charge, and request an assessment review. The Assessor's staff is now in the process of reviewing the assessments of more than 43,300 residential properties. This includes all single-family dwellings acquired since January 2004. As a result, it is estimated more than 30,000 properties will automatically receive assessment reductions. Generally speaking, homes purchased before 2004 are still worth more than their maximum taxable value under Prop 13 as of January 1, 2008, the lien date. It is my goal to see that no one pays more property tax than the law requires."

"If you deserve a reduction, there are four simple ways to accomplish it at no cost:

1. Wait to see what the Assessor does independently. Property owners receiving a reduction will be notified by mail in mid-July.
2. If you would like further assessment review after receiving the Value Notice, you can download a Decline in Value form from our website: <http://assessor.countyofventura.org>, and file it by mail, fax, or hand delivery to our office in the Government Center.

3. If you do not have access to a computer, you may call our office at (805) 654-2181 and request a Decline in Value form be mailed to you. You have until December 31, 2008, to file this form.
4. If you don't agree with results of the Assessor's independent reduction or your informal Decline in Value review, you also have the right to file the more formal Application for Changed Assessment. The application can be obtained, at no charge, from the Clerk of the Assessment Appeals Board located at the Government Center, or by phone at (805) 654-2251, or from their website: <http://ceo.countyofventura.org/cob>. You have between July 2 and September 15 to file this official form."

Taking these simple steps may result in a lowered assessment without paying a substantial fee to obtain the services of an outside agent.

Again, property owners are encouraged to wait until mid-July and see what the Assessor does independently. And remember, each year's taxable value cannot exceed its market value as of January 1st that year.

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