



Press Release

Long Beach Reform Coalition Prevails in *LBRC v. City of Long Beach* Sales Tax Lawsuit

Long Beach, Cal., November 8, 2025:

Sacramento Superior Court Judge Stephen Acquisto demolished the City of Long Beach's voter unapproved tax grab in a succinct ruling, issued tentatively last Thursday and affirmed at the conclusion of oral arguments at the Friday, November 7 trial hearing.

Judge Acquisto made his opinion of the Long Beach City's Council's unilateral move last December to advance the higher rate of sales tax to a premature date, years in advance of what was presented to voters (in [Measure A, 2020](#)), and which would have represented an extra estimated \$60 million from taxpayers' pockets: "The City's reading would require the Court to disregard the dates specified in the measure as to render them meaningless." He further wrote, "The City's Ordinance No. ORD-24-0027...violates the constitutional prohibition on tax increases without voter approval." (attached Ruling, p. 6)

In a Saturday press release, the City attempted damage control by stating that, "The City worked collaboratively with the State to review this issue, and both agreed a judge should review the entirety of the case and the ambiguity surrounding the start date of the increase."

This statement is false, and media outlets should seek direct confirmation from the California Department of Tax and Fee Administration (CDTFA) before treating it otherwise. State agencies do not invite cities to sue them. (The City's lawsuit against the CDTFA followed shortly after

LBRC's lawsuit against the City, and the two cases were coordinated and heard together before the same judge.)

As LBRC Executive Director Ian Patton personally observed during the Friday trial hearing, Counsel for the CDTFA, Caroline Lam, made it explicitly clear that CDTFA's conversations with the City of Long Beach were simple, clear, and direct: A tax rate not approved by voters is not constitutional and cannot and will not be collected on Long Beach's behalf by the CDTFA. Neither in CDTFA's briefs nor in Ms. Lam's oral arguments was there any acknowledgment of any ambiguity in the law whatsoever, either with regard to the State Constitution's prohibition on voter unapproved taxation (Prop. 218) or with regard to the clearly stated rate schedule presented in Long Beach Measure A (2020).

Statement by LBRC Exec. Dir. Ian Patton:

"The real question the residents of Long Beach should be asking themselves at this point is, why does a city with such an extreme level of municipal taxation still fail to pave the streets, maintain the parks, and provide sufficient public safety? We have a city sales tax *and* a utility users tax, neither of which most cities have at all. We have unusual sources of revenue from oil extraction and a major port, not to mention the city's marijuana dispensary tax revenue. Yet other cities get by, looking far better, with far better services, with far less. Where is all the money going?

Advancing the sales tax rate increase by years may have been *relative* minor attempted highway robbery of the Long Beach taxpayer, but the grand theft has been going on for years.

Furthermore, just as the City was not honest with Council about the legality of advancing the current sales tax rate, it has not been honest about Measure A in general. Its own mayor-appointed citizens oversight commission is [demanding to know where all the money has gone.](#)"

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