

**Subject: City Employee Bonuses - for publication**

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**Category:** [COMMUNITY\_SHSCO], [COMMUNITY\_Burbank]

Hello Dan,

Below, is more on City Employee Bonuses. You may publish it, if you wish. Its about 600 words:

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"DON'T GIVE AWAY MY MONEY"

What is a bonus? Webster's gives one definition as "money...given in addition to an employee's usual compensation."

Fine, but who does the giving? By implication, it's the employer, the person whose money is to be given. The very essence of a bonus is that a person who has money (the employer) *gives* some of it to one or more other people (the employees), typically for helping increase profits of a for-profit business. It's a zero-sum transaction. The funds of the employee are increased, and those of the employer are necessarily decreased by the same amount. Since it's his money, the employer naturally considers this consequence before deciding whether to give a bonus and, if so, in what amount.

In the case of giving bonuses to city employees, the residents of the city—the taxpayers—are the employers. They—we—are the ones whose money has been given for bonuses. It is our money that has been diminished by the giving. But we have not had the opportunity to decide if we wanted to give bonuses, to whom they would go, or how much. Someone else has made those decisions. Someone else has been giving away our money; someone whose assets have not been reduced by the giving. They get to be "good guys," with no downside. And if other residents have had their water & power bills increase as much as I have, we have not had a year of "profit," but of loss.

I confess to not having done much research on this topic. But I would guess that any bonuses that have been given were given by one or more heads of city departments. And from what I've heard, we, the public—whose money has been given away without any say—are not allowed to know to whom that money has been given or how much.

If I'm not mistaken, we have a city budget that is discussed and voted on in open council meetings by our chosen Councilmembers. And I would guess that salaries are in the budget; that each employment position in city government has pay grades that are known and published. And if that's right, then conceivably, despite salary limits, by the giving of bonuses, those pay grades can be arbitrarily exceeded without our knowledge or approval.

And if it's department heads who are giving bonuses, and we can't know how much they give or to whom, then that sounds like a real conflict of interest to me; because what's to prevent the department heads from giving bonuses to themselves? ("I've done a great job this year. I've earned it.") This conflict of interest seems especially egregious when applied to the City Manager and even more so to the City Attorney. He could give himself a bonus (again, with our money) and we wouldn't be allowed to know. This type of conflict makes me think of attorneys who take unapproved loans from their clients' trust accounts. Even if the City Attorney has not given himself a secret bonus, the mere possibility, presents a conflict that, I believe, the California State Bar Association would want to know about.

I don't want anyone giving away my money for any reason without my prior knowledge and consent. And I suspect that most residents of Burbank feel the same way about their money. We now have an opportunity to stop this miscarriage of duty: When we vote for Council Members, we can vote only for those who state publicly and

unequivocally that, if elected, they will vote to prevent the giving of our money for bonuses to city employees.

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