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For Immediate Release

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Assessor Pleased With Conviction In Deceptive Assessment Appeals Solicitation Mass Mailing

YUBA CITY—Sutter County Assessor Mike Strong today said he is pleased with the conviction of the principal of a company that misled property owners into believing they had to pay to have their property assessments appealed.

"I am very happy with the criminal conviction and very hopeful that California property owners who fell for this deceptive solicitation mailer, including some from Sutter County, will be reimbursed," Mr. Strong said.

Sean McConville, 29, pleaded guilty in Los Angeles Superior Court to a dozen misdemeanor counts of disclosure violation for unsolicited mailing, according to LA Deputy District Attorney Carolyn Nakaki.

McConville was ordered to perform 250 hours of community service and sentenced to three years summary probation. McConville must reimburse victims if the California Attorney General's Office is successful in a separate civil lawsuit, or face up to six years in jail.

In February of 2009, hundreds of property owners in Sutter and Yuba counties, and other counties across the state, received notices from a company called "Property Tax Reassessment." The notices, which advertised a \$179 fee for processing an appeal of the property owners assessment for property tax purposes, arrived in an envelope that appeared to be from a government agency, which was a violation of the law, according to the LA County DA's office.

"No property owner has to pay a dime to appeal a property tax assessment," Strong said. "The filing of an assessment appeal is free and there is no reason to waste your money with such companies." Mr. Strong added that "in most cases, property assessment disputes are resolved by my office without the necessity for proceeding with an appeal." According to Mr. Strong, his office already has reviewed roughly 8,500 primarily residential properties and, of those, over 6,800 have received assessment reductions, generating some \$5 million in overall tax savings for property owners.

Further, according to Mr. Strong, legislation (AB992) recently was signed into law (October 2009), now barring any assessment reduction filing service from "charging, demanding, or collecting money" for such service until *after* filing of the request for reduction with the appropriate agency.

Those who have paid an advance fee, in response to any property assessment reduction solicitation, are encouraged to contact the State of California Attorney General's Office for assistance in obtaining restitution.