



## **Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association Calls for Investigation of StanCOG Vacation Policy**

**MODESTO, CA** – The Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association (SCTA) stands for transparency and accountability. Today, SCTA is calling for an investigation following troubling findings in the 2025 Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury report; specifically regarding unauthorized vacation policies at the Stanislaus Council of Governments (StanCOG).

According to the Grand Jury’s report, StanCOG officials implemented a generous vacation policy without official approval, despite the existence of an officially approved and documented policy from November 17, 2021. The original policy capped vacation accrual at five weeks for individuals with twelve years of service, whereas the new undisclosed vacation policy granted up to nine weeks of vacation, convertible to cash annually.

The Grand Jury found no evidence that this expanded benefit was ever approved by the StanCOG Policy Board, which is the only body authorized to enact such changes. Additionally, when questioned by the Grand Jury, StanCOG officials failed to disclose how many weeks of vacation had been converted into cash by the Executive Director. The Grand Jury Report states that only two individuals appear to have benefited from this unapproved policy: the Executive Director, Rosa De Leon Park and the Director of Administrative Services, Cindy Malekos.

The Grand Jury report further notes that Cindy Malekos signed off on vacation cash-outs for Rosa De Leon Park, despite being aware of the policy board approved official five-week limit. After reviewing past policy board agendas from 2023 (when the Civil Grand Jury indicated that the policy could have been changed), the Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association is unaware of any documented action of the policy board approving this additional vacation time for StanCOG employees.

The Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association is calling for the following immediate actions:

- 1.** An investigation examining how StanCOG's unauthorized vacation policy was enacted. Taxpayers deserve to know how the policy was determined, who approved this policy, and who benefited from this unauthorized expenditure of taxpayer dollars.
- 2.** The existing ad-hoc committee include in their independent audit a full investigation of all vacation accrual and cash conversion transactions made under the unapproved nine-week policy. This should be presented as a formal report to the StanCOG Policy Board detailing whether any unauthorized payments were made, and if so, how much was received and by whom.

Publicly available information states that StanCOG rules require Policy Board approval for policy changes. Any alteration to vacation benefits made outside of this process violates the principles of public accountability and may represent a misuse of public funds.

“The taxpayers of Stanislaus County deserve full transparency,” Nick Dokoozlian, Chairman of the Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association said. “SCTA fears that StanCOG employees may have colluded to increase their personal vacation accrual time policy to financially gain from their public positions without any approval from the Policy Board. Government agencies are held accountable and answer to the policy board, which is comprised of elected officials throughout the county. If decisions were being made without their approval, this is against public interest, is undemocratic, and warrants an investigation.”

*The Stanislaus County Taxpayer Association is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization, founded by local residents who care deeply about responsible, effective, and accountable government. Our mission is to advocate for transparency, expose waste and misuse of public funds, and empower citizens to engage in local decision-making.*

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