

Fulton County Tax Commissioner's Office



March 6, 2013

The Honorable Lynne Riley  
Chair, Fulton County House Delegation  
Georgia House of Representatives, District 50  
504 CLOB  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Representative Riley:

Please accept this correspondence as a public record to express my concern relative to the defamation of my character as a public servant on behalf of Fulton County citizens. First and foremost I respect the authority of this esteemed body and their right to create laws in the best interest of Georgia's citizens. In fact I have never gone on record to debate any member of the Georgia General Assembly's authority to change the law as it relates to tax lien sales, taxes or the Office of the Tax Commissioner.

However, in light of recent media coverage and public discourse surrounding my conduct in office, I must draw the line. More time has been spent discussing my salary, rather than my collection rate and job performance. I have not responded to those discussions. I have chosen instead to allow the democratic process to continue unmolested by me. Yet even these discussions have progressed to a public onslaught of innuendo about my character which is a clear indication that this campaign for "change and reform" solely directed at my office is more of a personal agenda, rather than a public one. In fact I wish to provide to the Fulton delegation some real clear facts that should not and cannot be ignored which show that the actions being taken against me by members of this great body and Cox Enterprises through the Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) is simply retaliatory. Of startling note is that while the Atlanta Journal Constitution targeted me specifically in the most public way, they have failed to disclose to their readers that they have had liens placed on their properties by my Office and transferred to Vesta Holdings who they have also held under scrutiny. There is a high expectation from the AJC that governmental entities be transparent and yet when writing their stories about my office, they were not. One can only deduce that by failing to disclose their own liens, they essentially had an ulterior motive along with their cohorts in the delegation in this effort to discredit me. Their information

has been neither credible nor complete but it certainly has been compelling. Please see below facts that I wish to share with the delegation as you consider legislation targeting reform to my office:

1. 97% of taxpayers pay without liens being transferred. A maximum of 2% is transferred annually.
2. The Fulton County Board of Commissioners voted to oppose H.B. 346. I made no such official statement.
3. The cities who pay for the county collection services admit that they cannot do it more cheaply than or as effectively as the Fulton County Tax Commissioner. These collection arrangements save taxpayers millions in Fulton County.
4. Fulton County began selling liens (to Capital Assets) years before I joined County Government as Tax Commissioner.
5. Tax collection was abysmal in the county when the Tax Commissioner was appointed and controlled by the Board of Commissioners or County Manager. The millage rate rose continuously during that time.
6. The cities of Johns Creek and Sandy Springs can opt to collect their own taxes as nine other Fulton County cities do. I challenge anyone to assess the cost of what Johns Creek and Sandy Springs pay to my office in comparison to what other cities pay and their collection rates.
7. All Tax Commissioners who collect for cities are compensated as per Georgia law, and are paid more than \$1.00 per parcel.
8. It is unprecedented to have one member of a class of elected officials, especially a constitutional officer, singled out for special treatment, depriving the electorate the choice of their constitutional office who was elected by 70.5% of the votes in the most recent election.
9. Sponsors of the bill had liens placed on property or transferred by the Tax Commissioner's office for non-payment of taxes. (See Attachments)
10. Cox Enterprises, the parent company of the AJC, who advocates punitive change in the Tax Commissioner's status had liens placed on their properties or transferred by the Tax Commissioner's Office. (See Attachments)
11. Liens on Cox Enterprises were placed on their luxury hanger on 12/21/10 and purchased by Vesta Holdings on 12/22/10. Coincidentally, 12/21/10 was the official start date of two years of harassment of my Office using the open records act, and involvement of the AG.
12. Cox Companies receives Development Authority Exemptions, a privilege usually reserved for new businesses coming into the county, a practice now being challenged. They saved themselves more than two million dollars in taxes.
13. Representative Wendall Willard's liens were transferred on three separate occasions to Vesta Holdings for non-payment of taxes. (See Attachments)

I hope that you will strongly consider the information that I have provided such that we can all return to civil and intelligent discourse about public policy regarding taxes that will truly benefit citizens of Fulton County and the state of Georgia, respect the rights and vote of those citizens and do so without rancor.

Clearly the people who elected us all expect so much more from us and they certainly deserve it. More importantly, they deserve the whole truth.

Thank you for your consideration of this correspondence.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arthur E. Ferdinand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arthur" being the most prominent.

Arthur Ferdinand  
Tax Commissioner  
Fulton County

CC: Fulton County House Delegation

Fulton County Tax Commissioner's Office



March 6, 2013

The Honorable Judson Hill  
Chair, Fulton County Senate Delegation  
Georgia Senate, District 32  
421-D State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Senator Hill:

Please accept this correspondence as a public record to express my concern relative to the defamation of my character as a public servant on behalf of Fulton County citizens. First and foremost I respect the authority of this esteemed body and their right to create laws in the best interest of Georgia's citizens. In fact I have never gone on record to debate any member of the Georgia General Assembly's authority to change the law as it relates to tax lien sales, taxes or the Office of the Tax Commissioner.

However, in light of recent media coverage and public discourse surrounding my conduct in office, I must draw the line. More time has been spent discussing my salary, rather than my collection rate and job performance. I have not responded to those discussions. I have chosen instead to allow the democratic process to continue unmolested by me. Yet even these discussions have progressed to a public onslaught of innuendo about my character which is a clear indication that this campaign for "change and reform" solely directed at my office is more of a personal agenda, rather than a public one. In fact I wish to provide to the Fulton delegation some real clear facts that should not and cannot be ignored which show that the actions being taken against me by members of this great body and Cox Enterprises through the Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC) is simply retaliatory. Of startling note is that while the Atlanta Journal Constitution targeted me specifically in the most public way, they have failed to disclose to their readers that they have had liens placed on their properties by my Office and transferred to Vesta Holdings who they have also held under scrutiny. There is a high expectation from the AJC that governmental entities be transparent and yet when writing their stories about my office, they were not. One can only deduce that by failing to disclose their own liens, they essentially had an ulterior motive along with their cohorts in the delegation in this effort to discredit me. Their information

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Arthur Ferdinand  
Tax Commissioner  
Fulton County

CC: Members of the Fulton Senate Delegation