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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

State Senator Liu Introduces Legislation Wednesday to Implement Councilmember Huizar's Plan to Generate Graffiti Fighting Funds

SB138 would increase allowable surcharge for aerosol cans and markers to help L.A. City and County pay for millions of dollars of graffiti removal and help restore rapidly depleting murals

LOS ANGELES (Feb. 11, 2009) – With graffiti fighting costs Countywide in the tens of millions of dollars, State Senator Carol Liu (D-La Canada Flintridge) introduced legislation Wednesday calling for increasing the maximum voter-approved surcharges cities and counties can levy on aerosol cans and permanent markers to fund anti-graffiti efforts. Local voters would have to approve such a proposal by a two-thirds margin.

SB138, which is based on a proposal by Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar, would raise the maximum fees voters could approve for aerosol cans from 10 cents per can to 50 cents per spray can, and from 5 cents per permanent marker to 25 cents. The increase would be the first implemented in nearly 20 years.

“Graffiti removal costs millions of dollars and have placed an unfair burden on taxpayers throughout the state,” said Councilmember José Huizar. “We have been particularly hard hit here in Los Angeles. I commend Senator Liu for moving forward on this important legislation.”

The City of Los Angeles spends about \$7.6 million each year from the General Fund on graffiti-fighting efforts and L.A. County graffiti incidents more than doubled from 2002 to 2006, costing about \$30 million in graffiti removal and suppression related costs.

“We need more resources to clean up graffiti in our communities,” said Sen. Carol Liu, D-La Canada Flintridge. “I look forward to working with Councilmember Huizar, community leaders and concerned citizens as we move this bill forward.”

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Senator Liu anti-graffiti bill introduced

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The proposed fee would raise millions of dollars each year in the City of Los Angeles alone and even more in the County. Councilmember Huizar plans to lobby the County Board of Supervisors to place a measure on a Countywide ballot as soon as 2010 to assess such a fee, should this new legislation gain approval this year.

SB138 will allow cities and counties to ask voters if they want to approve an assessment on the sale of all spray paint, permanent markers and other graffiti marking devices, in order to pay for graffiti removal and mural restoration, a top priority for Councilmember Huizar, whose 14th District is home to half of the City's murals.

As the City's revenue has dried up in recent years, so has funding for mural restoration, which has fallen to \$20,000, compared to \$225,000 in 2000. The bill put forth by Liu, could give cities like Los Angeles more options for graffiti removal and mural preservation.

"Although Los Angeles is the Mural Capitol of the World and is home to some culturally and artistically significant murals, particularly on the Eastside, current funding simply does not adequately support much-needed mural preservation," said Councilmember Huizar. "We need to reverse that trend."

In recent years, graffiti left by tagging crews and gang members has become a significant quality of life issue for many Angelenos.

In fiscal year 2006-2007 alone, The Los Angeles City Office of Community Beautification gave out more than 18,733 gallons of paint to residents and volunteers to blot out graffiti. Thousands more gallons were used by various City contractors who removed more than 30.5 million square feet of graffiti from about 612,000 locations. More than 80,600 requests for graffiti removal were made to the City's 311 phone service and through its website during that same year, a significant jump from 2005-2006.

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