



June 14, 2017

Kim Schaefer
Government Affairs Director
Bakersfield Association of REALTORS®
2300 Bahamas Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93309

Dear Ms. Schaefer:

My name is Evlondo Cooper, Senior Fellow at Checks and Balances Project, a watchdog blog focused on bringing greater accountability to lobbyists, politicians, corporate managers and others who block progress toward a more sustainable economy.

As you know, Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) programs are a popular way for homeowners to finance energy efficient upgrades to their residences, as well as renewable energy projects and other improvements through property tax assessments.

Data shows [more than 30 states](#) across the country have enacted PACE legislation, with 19 states plus Washington D.C. administering active programs. Residential PACE programs have been authorized in California, Florida and Missouri. In California alone, PACE has helped to [add 28,500 jobs](#), while [benefitting thousands of homeowners and creating hundreds of jobs in Kern County](#).

Because of the program's success, there appears to be an ongoing, [coordinated attack on PACE](#), according to recent media reports. After a reader informed us that the California Association of REALTORS (C.A.R.) is working with your organization, the Bakersfield Association of REALTORS (B.A.R.), to run an anti-PACE campaign in Bakersfield, Checks and Balances has decided to take a closer look at these synchronized efforts to drive and amplify anti-PACE sentiment, particularly in Kern County.

Around late 2015, C.A.R. launched its anti-PACE initiative by [developing, sharing and publishing anti-PACE talking points](#) in [Orange County](#), [San Diego](#) and, most recently, [Bakersfield](#). According to its [December 2015 Association Executive Update](#):

OP ED PROJECT

C.A.R. is pleased to announce the launch of a new OpEd project. C.A.R. will be crafting OpEds on five different topics related to real estate. Associations are free to pitch the OpEd to their local media. C.A.R. staff is available to help local AOR's customize the OpEd for their local media and to advise on how best to pitch it. The first topic will be the issue of **PACE** liens, and will be available sometime in January. If you are interested in participating, please email Emmagene Samuel at emmagenes@car.org for more details.

C.A.R.'s role in funding these local campaigns is further illuminated in its [Winter 2016 Summary of Action Items](#), which states:

\$45,000 to a coalition of Local Associations, headed by Monterey Association of REALTORS®, to create an information and outreach campaign on PACE programs.

This anti-PACE campaign seems incongruent with C.A.R.'s internal positions on the program.

C.A.R.'s internal documents provide a sober assessment of PACE and its benefits. For example, this 2015 assessment of PACE prepared by C.A.R.'s Member Legal Services finds that, "[PACE financing can still be a viable way](#) to add conservation improvements to the home."

The internal memo further notes, "The downside for many homeowners [of PACE financing alternatives] is the requirement of going through all the hoops and credit checks involved in getting a mortgage, which could make obtaining a loan difficult for some homeowners."

But these nuanced points seem to be discarded in favor of a broadside against the PACE program [written by the president of your organization, Bill Richmond](#).

Given that the [Bakersfield City Council will soon decide the future of PACE in Kern County](#), would you please take the time to answer a few questions about your organization's anti-PACE initiative, and how it is coordinating with C.A.R. to roll this program back?

1. Has C.A.R. played a role in organizing local anti-PACE efforts and initiatives in Bakersfield?
2. Have you or any B.A.R. representative or affiliate ghostwritten op-eds or provided talking points for publication in Bakersfield newspapers?
3. Have you and/or any other B.A.R. representatives or affiliates been in communication with representatives of the Bakersfield Chamber of Commerce regarding PACE?
4. Have you and/or any B.A.R. representatives or affiliates provided any Bakersfield council members and/or their staffs with information about PACE? If so, who and when?
5. Have you and/or any B.A.R. representatives or affiliates been in communication with any Bakersfield council members and/or their staffs regarding past, current or future PACE policy? If so, who and when?

Thank you for taking the time to address these important questions. We look forward to sharing your answers with our readers and the Bakersfield community.

You can contact me at email evlondo@checksandbalancesproject.org or call 504-521-7440.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Regards,



Evlondo Cooper
Senior Fellow