

**Where there's smoke**

Representatives of the Town of Apple Valley repeatedly have given assurances that water users would be protected from rate increases by Proposition 218, after the town completes its hostile takeover of Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company.

These assurances are particularly galling to Apple Valley residents whose combined trash and sewer bills from the town are twice their water bills, with the town's sewer charges making up more than half the bill. As a result, some residents have been understandably skeptical about the town's claims regarding Prop. 218 protection. In an unexpected twist, it may turn out that the town is correct on this one.

Have you ever heard of Krause Kalfayan Benink & Slavens? KKBS is a law firm that has successfully brought lawsuits against city governments on behalf of citizens for Prop. 218 violations, over how these governments charged residents for city services. City governments in Anaheim, Sutter Creek, Petaluma, San Diego, Pasadena and Riverside, for example, have had to repay tens of millions of dollars for overcharging citizens. Despite the fact that the California Legislature enacted Prop. 218 a year before the Town of Apple Valley incorporated in 1998, there are still cities that are not in compliance.

Residents of Apple Valley may soon discover they have front-row seats to KKBS' next target, as the law firm has submitted a 21-question public records request to the town focusing on rates for sewer and trash services, as well as transfers of taxpayer funds to subsidize the golf course.

Concerned citizens have been trying for months to sound the alarm about how the town manages its finances, only to be dismissed by the Town Council. Maybe KKBS will have better luck getting the attention of our council members.

— *Greg Raven, Apple Valley*

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