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August 7, 2003
VIA EXPRESS MAIL

FreeRepublic, LLC
Fresno, CA 93794

Re: Infringement of Copyrights of the San Jose Mercury News, Inc.

Dear [REDACTED]:

This firm represents the San Jose Mercury News, Inc. ("Mercury News"). It has been brought to our attention that FreeRepublic, LLC is, through its website at www.freerepublic.com, copying and displaying copyrighted material of the Mercury News. I am writing to advise you that the copying and displaying of Mercury News materials by FreeRepublic must cease immediately.

At least one entire Mercury News article, "Taxpayer Taxi," is reproduced verbatim on the FreeRepublic website, at the URL <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/713163/posts>. FreeRepublic's reproduction of this article constitutes copyright infringement. The Taxpayer Taxi story was written by the Mercury News and published on July 9, 2002. It was also disseminated through the Mercury News website, www.bayarea.com. The copyrights to all such materials are owned by the Mercury News. No permission to copy and display this article or any other Mercury News materials has been sought or obtained from the Mercury News. Attached are copies of the Mercury News article as it appeared on the authorized bayarea.com site, and as copied and posted on the freerepublic.com site.

Moreover, FreeRepublic's infringement of the Mercury News' copyrights is indisputably willful. You and FreeRepublic have previously sued and been held liable to the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post, pursuant to a stipulated judgment, for precisely the same conduct in which you are now engaging with respect to the Mercury News. *Los Angeles Times, et al. v. Free Republic, et al.*, Case No. 98-7840 (C.D. Cal. 2002).

FreeRepublic must immediately remove the Taxpayer Taxi story as well as any other Mercury News materials from all websites it operates or controls, it must provide a list of all Mercury News materials removed, and it must certify that all such materials have been removed and that FreeRepublic will not permit the future posting of copyrighted materials of the Mercury News.

If these measures are not taken immediately, the Mercury News will take whatever actions it deems necessary to protect its interests. Please contact me promptly to confirm FreeRepublic's compliance with these requests.

Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich LLP

[REDACTED]
August 7, 2003

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I certify under penalty of perjury that I am authorized to act on behalf of the Mercury News in addressing the infringement of its copyrights in this material.

Sincerely,

Gray Cary Ware & Freidenrich LLP

By: _____

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]@graycary.com

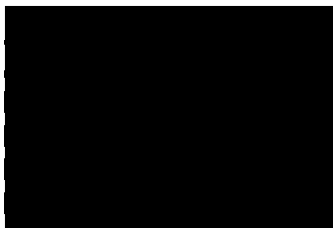
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Posted on Mon, Jul. 08, 2002

The Mercury News

Taxpayers' taxi

By Mark Gladstone and Neam Levey
Mercury News Sacramento Bureau

SACRAMENTO - When Maria Contreras-Sweet wants a ride to the airport, she rings up the California Highway Patrol. When she is invited to talk to grocers in Palm Springs, the CHP drives her. When she needs to get from her Los Angeles area home to a breakfast in Orange County, the Highway Patrol comes to her door.

Contreras-Sweet, Gov. Gray Davis' secretary of business, transportation and housing, has had the CHP shuttle her on more than 200 trips in the past two years at a cost of more than \$75,000, according to records obtained by the Mercury News.

The CHP routinely provides this service to Davis and other statewide elected officials, but no other unelected member of the Davis Cabinet has made such extensive use of the Highway Patrol, according to the CHP.

As the Cabinet official who oversees the CHP and a dozen other departments, Contreras-Sweet said she clears the use of officers with CHP Commissioner Dwight O. ``Spike'' Helmick or his staff.

``We're talking about a very few instances," Contreras-Sweet said in an interview Monday. ``The commissioner said that these were appropriate usages, and I have yielded to his discretion."

But her unusual use of a service normally reserved for top elected officials is raising questions over whether she is taking advantage of the perks of her office -- especially when the state is pinching pennies to close its \$23.6 billion budget deficit.

Many of the trips were from Contreras-Sweet's home in the San Gabriel Valley to events in the Los Angeles area, such as a highway dedication and a breakfast for constituents held by Assemblyman Lou Correa, D-Santa Ana. Other trips were to engagements farther away, including Fresno, San Diego and Santa Barbara.

Contreras-Sweet or aides even had sworn CHP officers wash and gas

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her vehicle, and one time deliver her car keys to Los Angeles International Airport, the records show. Contreras-Sweet denied she had ever asked for her car to be washed and gassed up.

CHP Commissioner Helmick said he believes the service is tied to legitimate state business and acknowledged that on occasion he has recommended that Contreras-Sweet use the Highway Patrol.

Strong defense

Davis press secretary Steve Maviglio issued a strong defense of Contreras-Sweet. "If any CEO ran an organization of that size and drove herself around," he said, "they'd be laughed out of the business world."

Contreras-Sweet is not the first business, transportation and housing secretary to extensively use the CHP's services, according to Davis spokesman Maviglio. Gov. Pete Wilson's secretary resigned after revelations that he misused the CHP.

One Republican lawmaker said Contreras-Sweet should do the same.

"With the threat of terrorism and the growing budget crisis, it is outrageous that Contreras-Sweet would waste resources and pull cops off the street to serve her personal needs," Sen. Ross Johnson said after being told of the Mercury News' findings. "The governor ought to demand the resignation of Contreras-Sweet and whoever else is responsible."

This spring, Johnson, R-Irvine, accused Contreras-Sweet of illegally using state-financed mailers to tout the governor's record on transportation and housing.

The Davis administration has denied there was anything wrong with the mailers.

When Davis tapped the Mexican-born woman to head one of the most powerful agencies in state government nearly four years ago, Contreras-Sweet became the first Latina in a California governor's Cabinet.

Already a well-known figure in the corporate and government worlds, Contreras-Sweet had been an executive with 7-Up/RC Bottling, ran her own public relations firm and served on the board of directors of Blue Cross of California.

High profile in Cabinet

As secretary of the \$10 billion business, transportation and housing agency, the 46-year-old Contreras-Sweet oversees several key state departments, including Caltrans and the CHP. Contreras-Sweet, who earns \$131,000 a year, has assumed a high profile in the Davis

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Cabinet.

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Davis' spokesman Maviglio said in defending Contreras-Sweet that previous secretaries had used CHP drivers:

A decade ago, Carl Covitz, who filled the same job under Wilson, was forced to resign over his use of state perks, most notably his decision to commandeer a CHP helicopter so that he and his family could watch a Desert Storm parade in Los Angeles.

Contreras-Sweet's tenure has not been without controversy either.

In addition to Johnson's complaints, Contreras-Sweet has drawn criticism for her role in bailing out an HMO after it hired one of Davis' closest political allies as a lobbyist.

More recently, she defended her agency when a lawmaker proposed transferring control of the CHP from it to the governor's office.

Her extensive use of the CHP has remained a more quiet irritant to some in state government.

For the past two years, Contreras-Sweet has used an unmarked vehicle driven by a plainclothes officer for everything from trips to and from the airport and to local speaking engagements to long journeys between Sacramento and the Bay Area and between Los Angeles and other Southern California cities.

Contreras-Sweet maintains offices in both Sacramento and Los Angeles.

According to records, she has used CHP-driven cars to go to an event at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, a memorial for a slain CHP officer in Pasadena and a parade in Baldwin Park.

Three times in the past two years, she had CHP officers drive her the approximately 20 miles from Sacramento to Folsom for meetings of the California Independent System Operator, which manages the state's power grid. Contreras-Sweet served on the ISO board.

But Contreras-Sweet has also used CHP officers for long trips. On April 3, a CHP officer drove the Cabinet secretary from the Los Angeles area to Fresno for a series of events and then took her back home the next day, a round-trip journey of more than 450 miles.

On March 14, she was driven more than 150 miles to and from Palm Springs to address a meeting of the Mexican American Grocers.

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No other unelected state official was chauffeured home across the state after the terrorist attacks, according to the CHP.

In the past two years, Contreras-Sweet has also had the CHP drive her to or from the Bay Area from Sacramento 13 times.

During the same period, CHP officers have taken her to or from airports around the state 21 times, according to the records.

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In an interview on Monday, Contreras-Sweet cited a variety of reasons why she needs a CHP escort, including her need to speak confidentially to Helmick on the phone. The secretary also said she doesn't want to risk accidents talking on the phone while behind the wheel.

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Contact Mark Gladstone at mgladstone@sjmercury.com or (916) 325-4314.

Contact Noam Levey at nlevey@sjmercury.com or (916) 712-5061.



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California: Taxpayer's Taxi

[Mercury News](#) ^ | 7/9/02 | By Mark Gladstone and Noam Levey

Posted on 07/09/2002 8:11 AM PDT by [NormsRevenge](#)

SACRAMENTO - When Maria Contreras-Sweet wants a ride to the airport, she rings up the California Highway Patrol. When she is invited to talk to grocers in Palm Springs, the CHP drives her. When she needs to get from her Los Angeles area home to a breakfast in Orange County, the Highway Patrol comes to her door.

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CHP Commissioner Helmick said he believes the service is tied to legitimate state business and acknowledged that on occasion he has recommended that Contreras-Sweet use the Highway Patrol.

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I'm almost speechless ..
Another scandal brewing :-?



DUMP DAVIS & the Den of Socialists

GO SIMON

1 posted on 07/09/2002 8:11 AM PDT by [NormsRevenge](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: NormsRevenge

OK .. I got my breath :-)

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Hmmm? Can California afford this ?

2 posted on 07/09/2002 8:15 AM PDT by [NormsRevenge](#)
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To: NormsRevenge

Davis press secretary Steve Maviglio issued a strong defense of Contreras-Sweet. "If any CEO ran an organization of that size and drove herself around," he said, "they'd be laughed out of the business world."

The difference is that the CEO *earned* the money to pay for limo service, he didn't steal it from the taxpayers.

3 posted on 07/09/2002 8:16 AM PDT by [Mr. Jeeves](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: NormsRevenge

The arrogance is astounding. Could make for good campaign fodder a la "Gray Davis says he is tough on crime..." Also on the budget front...

4 posted on 07/09/2002 8:21 AM PDT by [eureka!](#)
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To: NormsRevenge

Why do I see California going right down the very same path as Zimbabwe? I'm seeing elected officials and appointed officials in California behaving in ways that remind me of the behavior of every single third world tinpot dictator who has ever come along. While the infrastructure crumbles and the budget falls down a bottomless hole of debt, the "lords and ladies" of Sacramento parade themselves in their finery while having the Highway Patrol ferry them about as their personal chauffeurs.

How long before these perfumed princes start "appropriating" property because it appeals to them? How long before they start "confiscating" bank accounts because someone who is politically disadvantaged has "too much money"? How long before dissidents begin "disappearing" because they ask too many questions? Seriously, California is turning into a third world Marxist dictatorship right before our eyes!

5 posted on 07/09/2002 8:24 AM PDT by [Billy bob bob](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: NormsRevenge

The depth of corruption of squat Davis' administration is beyond comprehension!!!

6 posted on 07/09/2002 8:37 AM PDT by [Toidylop](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: NormsRevenge

Exactly what I was thinking...with Kalifornication's budget woes, I would think spending that sort of money to transport this loser would be an obvious stupid move.

This woman must truly be the lazy bumb that the majority of those bleeding heart liberals tend to be.

7 posted on 07/09/2002 8:49 AM PDT by [TheBattman](#)
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To: NormsRevenge

Contreras-Sweet maintains offices in both Sacramento and Los Angeles.

In an interview on Monday, Contreras-Sweet cited a variety of reasons why she needs a CHP escort, including her need to speak confidentially to Helmick on the phone. The secretary also said she doesn't want to risk accidents talking on the phone while behind the wheel... LOLOL

Thar's Gold in them thar taxPayer's pockets .. If now isn't a good time for a taxpayer rebellion, I don't know when is..

8 posted on 07/09/2002 8:52 AM PDT by [NormsRevenge](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: NormsRevenge

The fricken arrogances, the fact that they see no problems speak volumes

You don't use CHP officers or any other employees (unless there hired as a personal assistance) as your peons

9 posted on 07/09/2002 9:18 AM PDT by [tophat9000](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: Ernest_at_the_Beach

fyi

10 posted on 07/09/2002 9:27 AM PDT by [Free the USA](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 9](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: Billy_bob_bob

Why do I see California going right down the very same path as Zimbahwe?

LOL. I'm going to steal that line and use it often. I hope you don't mind.... :-)

11 posted on 07/09/2002 10:08 AM PDT by [monkeyshine](#)
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To: Free the USA; NormsRevenge; *calgov2002; Carry_Okie; SierraWasp; Gophack; eureka!; ElkGroveDan; ...

Thanks!

Another juicy scandal to tie to Davis.

Keep it coming!

Way to go Norm!

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12 posted on 07/09/2002 10:14 AM PDT by [Ernest_at_the_Beach](#)
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To: NormsRevenge; ElkGroveDan

This is pathetic. She makes \$131,000 a year and needs taxpayer funded cops to drive her around the state! This is so blatantly an abuse of power. She has the money to hire her own damn driver at far less than \$75,000 a year! I will admit, very little gets me riled up anymore because we hear about abuses in government all the time (particularly with Davis!), but THIS TAKES THE CAKE!

Having the CHP fetch her car keys? Why did airport security take them? Accident? What a LAME excuse! And why couldn't she call a friend, husband, son, daughter, neighbor, mother, father to pick them up for her like everyone else in the country does?

And Davis defending her! Geez! Then using the argument that other cabinet members did it (then pointing out that they were forced to resign). Yeah, so, why aren't you calling on Contreras-Sweet to resign? Come on! How stupid do you think we are????????

DUMP DAVIS!

13 posted on 07/09/2002 10:42 AM PDT by [Gophack](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 1](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: Ernest_at_the_Beach; NormsRevenge

Check it out. Might be law-breaking here. In some states there's laws against this. Whether Grayboy or Sweet know it, Cali does have laws that govern "public servants."

14 posted on 07/09/2002 10:43 AM PDT by [Liz](#)
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To: tophat9000

I think the fact that she used the CHP to drive her home to Los Angeles when the airplanes were grounded is a GROSS example of abuse of power. She could have rented a driver, a car. We were on a MAJOR TERROR ALERT THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY and SHE uses the CHP to chauffeur her around!

The audacity of that B*TCH!

15 posted on 07/09/2002 10:44 AM PDT by [Gophack](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 9](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: Mr. Jeeves

The difference is that the CEO earned the money to pay for limo service, he didn't steal it from the taxpayers.

BUMP!!!!!!!!!!!!

16 posted on 07/09/2002 10:45 AM PDT by [Gophack](#)
[[Post Reply](#) | [Private Reply](#) | [To 3](#) | [View Replies](#)]

To: Gophack

California: Taxpayer's Taxi

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I hope in her next job the boss makes her fetch coffee

17 posted on 07/09/2002 10:55 AM PDT by [tophat9000](#)

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To: [tophat9000](#)

I hope in her next job the boss makes her fetch coffee

She should be in prison.

18 posted on 07/09/2002 10:58 AM PDT by [Gophack](#)

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