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Prop K Charter Reform Proposal
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I am strongly opposed to any form of selling or worse, the auctioning off of medallions in San Francisco. Though the buying and selling of medallions may be a source of revenue for the city and those currently holding medallions, it would be a grave injustice to those who have been waiting on the list and adjusted their lives in order to comply with the strict driving requirement to qualify.

Even if auctioned medallions are offered only to drivers on the list, the drivers who don't have the money, will be passed up by those further down the list, who do. If financing is offered to all those who reach the top of the list, they are still forced to start off in debt, and a huge chunk of revenue will go to the banks and the city, rather than to the permit holder, or ultimately, drivers in general.

If the city would seriously crack down on the illegal limosine operations, they would create significant revenue and be able to issue hundreds more permits for legitimate taxicabs as well as justify its fees.

Though some adjustments need to be made, through Prop K, San Francisco has pioneered a more equitable system of distributing medallions to longtime working cabdrivers, who risk their lives and sacrifice their health on a daily basis. With Prop K, working drivers on the list eventually get rewarded after putting in years of dilligent service and may achieve a senior status, where they have more control of their working conditions, and can earn a higher level of income. It gives a sense of pride and professionalism to the industry, and improves the quality and number of longterm experienced drivers in San Francisco. It also helps prevent our taxi industry from being gamed by speculators and investors who don't actually do the work.

With the implementation of the "Daly/Ma Amendment", which requires years of driving prior to attaining a medallion, non-drivers and those only interested in making a "fast buck" have virtually been eliminated from attaining new medallions, and the waiting list has been moving much faster.

Since the "Daly/Ma Amendment" will soon require 5 years of driving, prior to receiving a medallion, once a driver has had a medallion for 5 years, they will have actually driven at least 10 years, usually many more. Most drivers are in their 40's, 50's, even 60's before receiving a medallion. Some are already in their 70's and have been driving 30 years or more.

Arguments for buying and selling medallions appeal to some medallion holders due to lack of a retirement plan, or a way to "escape the industry". I believe this can be addressed with a gradual relaxation of the driving requirement. Twenty five percent could be taken off every five years, and an additional 25% when a driver reaches the age of 65. There could be an age requirement such as 55, to begin eligibilty for driving reduction.

Some changes should be made to the waiting list process also. A driver should automatically be placed on the list when receiving an A-Card, and only required to pay a fee when they have met the driving requirement and wish to remain eligible for a medallion. So as not to string drivers along indefinitely, once a driver on the list has met the requirement for 9 out of 10 continuous years, they should remain qualified, whether they continue to drive or not.

The results of the Daly/Ma amendment are just starting to take effect. The bulk of corporate medallions have yet to be returned to the city, and many are under dispute. Let's give the principles of Prop K a chance to work, and not throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater.