

Dear Fellow Citizens for Common Sense:

It has been almost two decades since St. Joseph County removed our recycling centers and started charging all of us another tax. Now they want to increase the charge, which prompted South Bend to threaten to withdraw altogether. If South Bend would opt out, guess whose recycling bill would have to increase to make up the difference?

Back in 2004, Citizens for Common Sense defended me in a lawsuit for not paying my recycling bill. I took that stand NOT because I was against recycling---I DO recycle---but because the mandatory charge was unconstitutional, unfair and inequitable. To add insult to injury, we are expected to pay money for this privilege, while they reap the benefit of selling our stuff!

As a further insult, the SJCSWD began summoning people to the courthouse, taking them into a little room and intimidating them. I witnessed this myself and it was an unforgettable sight to see a distressed elderly couple tearfully pay their bill in fear.

Fast forward to 2017, people are still being intimidated at Small Claims and many of us are losing sleep at the prospect that we may lose our homes now that recycling is on the property tax bill. This makes me extremely anxious, even though I believe in my conscientious resistance and am willing to take the risk in order to change how we are treated.

Before filing another lawsuit, I would like to see a change in the recycling program where those who want to keep the service could opt in, while those who have other choices could opt out. All we want is fair and equal treatment by making the program voluntary! Otherwise, we citizens will need to come up with cash for an attorney to file another lawsuit, but this time, I am hoping we can get a meeting of minds between the Solid Waste Management District and We the People!

*Sandy Hochstetler*