

# UTCC VOICE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED TAXIDRIVERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Volume III

December 2010

Issue 2

## Cabdrivers furious over \$2 hike in Airport Departure Tax

UTCC calls on MPEA, City, State to change policies to ensure cabdrivers fully compensated

It has been two months since the Metropolitan Pier & Exposition Authority (MPEA) has raised the Airport Departure Tax from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per stamp, despite widespread opposition from cabdrivers. At issue is the city and the state's failure to address the fact that in many situations it is impossible for cabdrivers to reimburse themselves for this tax.

### MPEA: An "Intergovernmental Authority"

The Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority, also known as the MPEA, is a corporation that was created by the Illinois General Assembly (the Illinois State Gov-

ernment) in the Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority Act. The MPEA owns and manages McCormick Place and Navy Pier and uses these facilities to promote tourism and to host large conventions.

In 1992 the MPEA entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Chicago. This agreement enabled the MPEA to collect an Airport Departure Tax from all persons providing ground transportation from the O'Hare and Midway Airports. The money collected from this agreement is used to pay off debts from bonds taken out by the MPEA to fund the expansion of Navy Pier and McCormick Place. These expansions

were intended to increase Chicago's competitiveness in attracting tourists and large conventions and

to generate revenue for the city.

CONT. ON PAGE 4



## Taxation without representation: \$1 Tax Surcharge angers cabdrivers

Taxi drivers are outraged by a \$1 per trip tax proposal put forth by Alderman Ed Burke and Alderman Carrie Austin. This tax is estimated to generate \$70 million of revenue for the city and would be used to balance the city's bloated budget.

There are an estimated 10,000 active cab drivers in the city of Chicago. This means that on average, each cab driver will be responsible for collecting and remitting \$7,000 per year to the city. According to a November 17, 2010 Sun Times Article,

CONT. ON PAGE 7

**Get involved in the struggle against unjust fees & taxes!**

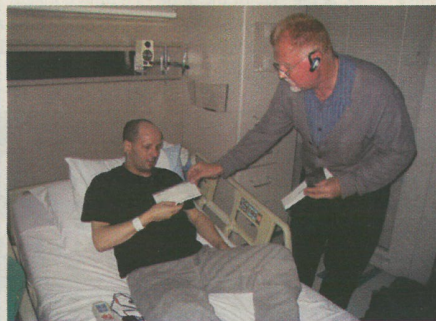
**Join the fight for rights, respect & human dignity!**

**CALL UTCC: 773-342-8822**

### INSIDE...

DO YOU HAVE IMMIGRATION ISSUES?.....	3
RAJA KHAN'S ARREST .....	3
CABDRIVERS HAVE HUMAN RIGHTS TOO .....	6

## A wave of violence: City finally implements driver safety placard in new ratesheet as violence spikes



UTCC Chair Fayez Khozindar visits Farid Kessanti at the hospital to donate money raised for him and his family

As the wave of violence against taxi drivers became very tense and lethal a few months ago, UTCC proved once again to be an effective organization for the interests of the drivers and their wellbeing.

When this organizer went to the intensive care unit of Stroger Hospital to visit Mamoun Homsy who was stabbed repeatedly, he found out

about another taxi driver, Farid Kessanti, lying unconscious two rooms down the hall as a result of a drunken driver smashing his car and his body.

A few days later, a driver called Abdulkadir Salah was another victim of an attack when his cab was carjacked and driven by the carjacker across the city. While the driver was talking to the police,

CONT. ON PAGE 4

AB کے ڈیپور بھائی  
UTCC  
کو جوائنٹ  
کرو



By Waseem Syed

میں اپنے تمام AB ڈیپور  
بھائیوں سے درخواست کرتا  
ہیں کہ وہ UTCC  
کو جوائنٹ کریں اس  
جوائنٹ کرنے کا سب سے  
بڑا فائدہ ہے آپ سنی  
آف مشاگو کے ظلم سے  
بچ سکیں گے میں

CONT. ON PAGE 6

# A wave of violence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the cab company located the vehicle through the GPS system, but the police did nothing to apprehend the attacker.

Since UTCC is a concerned and responsible organization, we took the initiative and acted promptly by printing flyers and using our network of bulletin boards across the city to denounce this wave of violence against taxi drivers.

Furthermore, the UTCC organizers with the help of its members and the drivers at large collected several thousands of dollars to help support the interests of the victims and their families during the course of these harsh events.

We did everything possible to support the victims of violence and their families. During our interaction with them, the most touching and moving experience came about when we presented two thousand dollars to Mr. Farid Kessanti. His eyes were full of tears and sorrow.

Mr. Kessanti at first refused to accept the check. We respected and understood his wishes and his position. The man had pride and refused to be helpless. He hesitated to accept the charity because he felt humiliated. However, we convinced him that the check was a symbolic gesture,

showing support from his fellow drivers who like to be responsible for and helpful to their fellow drivers in need. This was the least they could do.

Finally, neither Mr. Homsni nor Mr. Kessanti was a dues-paying member of UTCC. However, we treated them as if they were because we believe that all taxi drivers are members of UTCC at large. So we urge all of you to join UTCC because we treat you as family. The next time you are approached by a UTCC organizer, please don't hesitate to join the family, your family, where you will feel you belong..

## Action Required for The Continuous Robbery Against Cab Drivers in South Side of Chicago

[Letter recieved by UTCC from Kris Sahoo (Edited)]

I was robbed by [two young men] around 18-19 yrs old on 6th Oct, 2010 at 6 P.M at 48th and Wabash. I was dropping one aged couple at 8 South Michigan Ave. I gave their required change after accepting their fare.

Two young black men, who were very skinny and tall around 6ft dressed in fully black

dress, approached me at my passenger side door. One guy bent into the cab and looked inside the cab while requesting me to take them to 48th and Wabash. However, I allowed them to sit in the back seats.

They requested to play radio 107.5 FM. When we reached at the destination, they came out of the cab. One guy came to my driver side door and another guy was on the passenger side door. The guy who was near to me tried to open my side door but could not open the door. He requested me to open the glass-window of passenger side to pay their fare of \$20.00.

As soon as I opened the window half way, that guy pressed the door switch. Then other guy at my driver side pulled the door and took away my single dollars of \$41, which was kept at the side of the door. Then both run away towards the alley, which was condemned by two

ladies at that neighborhood. I called the police at 911 who arrived after 20 minutes.

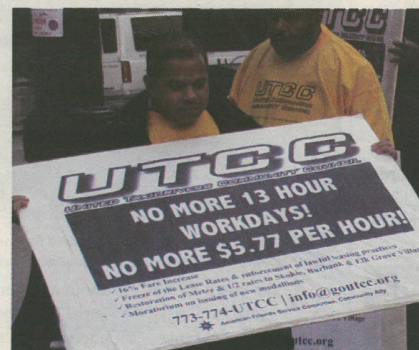
The police just wrote the report and left. I want to bring your kind attention that similar thing happened to other ten cabdrivers by same two or three black guys at the same or near by locations.

It is also interesting that every other cabdrivers were asked to play the radio of same 107.5 FM. Also, other ten drivers who came today to the Detective Division at 51st and Went worth Ave Police Station to identify the culprits, were narrating the same story-- in each occasion the cab drivers were snatched away of their Taxi keys with punching at their faces.

Here is cabdrivers and neighborhood's concern:

[Unless these attackers are caught and brought

CONT. ON PAGE 8



Cabdriver activist Kris Sahoo is leading an effort against violence after his own robbery

## UTCC VOICE

### UNITED TAXIDRIVERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

#### OUR VISION

TO ORGANIZE AND UNIFY ALL LICENSED CHAUFFEURS IN THE CHICAGO AREA, SO WE CAN COLLECTIVELY OVERCOME OPPRESSION AND ACHIEVE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

#### WRITERS

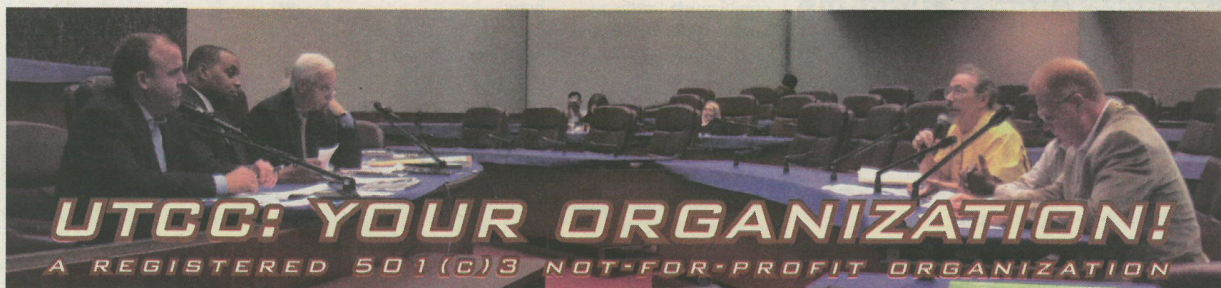
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**WE WELCOME YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS, FEEDBACK, AND LETTERS!**



# Raja Khan's Airport Departure Tax Arrest

By Chris Chandler

"It's an unbelievable thing." That's how Raja Khan's friend described his arrest on charges of providing aid to terrorists. "He's the most un-harmful person. Such a helpful person."

Arif Shazzad got to know Raja as a fellow cabdriver back in the 1990's, and now owns a clothing store on North Avenue. Raja and his wife Diane would drop by the store after working on repairs at Diane's mother's house nearby. "He was helping her fix her home," he said.

"He would stop for any broken down cab, even when he had passengers," Shazzad said. "He loves the United States. His wife is here, his children, his grandchildren."

That response was typical in the cab driving community after Khan was arrested in his cab in downtown Chicago March 26 and charged with plotting to send money to a terrorist.

"He is a good person. I don't believe one bit that he was trying to do anything bad here," said Osman, who met Khan in 1990 as a fellow cab driver. "He and his wife Diane are activists in the cab community. He's a good guy who cares for people"

"It doesn't make sense," said Sabir Waheed, owner of the Blue Ribbon Cab Co. "He doesn't have the time to be involved. He's driving full time, he's active in the UTCC and he has his family." Waheed said he has seen Khan over the past 15 years, and knows that he has been active in the cab union, which "is actually trying to help the drivers." He speculated that there must have

CONT. ON PAGE 6

In the fiscal year 2008 the MPEA collected over \$9 million dollars from the Airport Departure Tax. These numbers are set to increase due to the doubling of the Airport Departure Tax, reportedly an estimated \$8 million more.

## "McPier Bill" Passes Despite Controversy, Mayor's Opposition, Governor's Veto

Senate Bill 0028 (also known as the McPier Bill) which raised the Airport Departure Tax was a contentious bill that saw heavy opposition. In addition to cabdrivers, the Carpenters Union, Steelworkers Union,

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that resulted in an estimated 500 phone calls to Governor Pat Quinn's office, while other cabdrivers took action individually, writing letters, petitioning, and calling Quinn's office.

In fact even Mayor Daley opposed the tax increase - On May 19th, 2010, the Sun Times reported that Mayor Daley had said "It's a high tax. It does affect all the taxi drivers. Most of 'em are students and working people. ... It's a concern that everyone has. ... You get in a taxicab, and they'll tell you that. ... They're working two, three jobs to support their families and themselves."

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In the fiscal year 2008 the MPEA collected over \$9 million dollars from the Airport Departure Tax. These numbers are set to increase due to the doubling of the Airport Departure Tax, reportedly an estimated \$8 million more.

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Illinois Limousine Association, and others urged Illinois Governor Pat Quinn to veto it.

Most non-taxi/limo opponents of the McPier Bill were especially concerned about dramatic changes in work-rules that would reduce crew sizes and result in a drop in income for union workers at McCormick Place. Cabdrivers, limousine companies, and airport bus services were concerned about the hike in the Airport Departure Tax. UTCC organized a daylong call-in action

Those cabdrivers who've been involved in advocating for a permanent fare increase would be surprised by Mayor Daley's statement- he has consistently opposed fare increases for the last five years. However, the same Sun-Times article clarifies: "The mayor acknowledged that his administration lobbied against the tax because it hurts cabbies and puts the city at a competitive disadvantage. 'It's both out of Midway and out of O'Hare. That was a concern we all had in

CONT. ON PAGE 4

# Do you have immigration issues? Have you been a victim of a violent crime? Or have you been threatened with retaliation because you reported a crime?

A new collaborative project between United Taxidivers Community Council (UTCC) and the Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago can assist crime victims with immigration issues. If you qualify, you may be able to adjust your immigration status in order to live in the United States with legal status.

"The U Visa is available for immigrants, including cabdrivers, who have been attacked in the workplace and are cooperating with police to report the attack. The entire purpose is so that immigrants can report crimes, come out the shadows, and not be afraid to speak out against violence," according to Anna Lusero, who works with the Legal Assistance

Foundation.

According to a 2007 study "Driven into Poverty" released by

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**"This is a real opportunity to gain legal status in this country so don't hesitate to contact UTCC for more information to see if you are eligible"**

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the University of Illinois, 1 in 5 (20%) of cabdrivers have been a victim of a physical attack. UTCC has been working for over two years to fight for justice for cabdrivers who have been attacked on the job by advocating with the State's Attorney's Office and the

Police Department.

"The U Visa allows eligible applicants and some of their imme-

diately family members to stay in the country legally, get permission to work, and eventually apply for legal residency," adds Lusero. "Additionally, if you qualify, we may be able to assist you with filing a civil suit against your attacker."

UTCC's collaboration with Legal Assistance Foundation is the first of its kind- while the U-Visa has been widely used in human trafficking case, (mostly involving domestic violence), the Legal Assistance Foundation's new project is exclusively designed to serve immigrant workers such as cabdrivers.

"This is a real opportunity to gain legal status in this country so don't hesitate to contact UTCC for more information to see if you are eligible," says Lusero. "If you have been a victim of an attack, please call the UTCC office in order to find out if you are eligible to apply for the U Visa." Call UTCC at 773-342-8822 for further information.

# Cabdrivers furious over \$2 hike in Airport Departure Tax

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

regards to a new tax placed only upon the two airports. No other place in the state of Illinois,' [Daley] said."

Ultimately, Governor Quinn made an "amendatory veto" of the McPier bill, meaning he changed large portions of it, including the portion affecting the Airport Departure Tax, on May 26th 2010. Before cabdrivers could celebrate, however, his veto was overturned by the Illinois Senate and passed with the Airport Departure Tax hike intact.

## An Unjust System of Compensation

However, some complaints about the hike in the tax seem to miss the point; the fact is that the bill includes mechanisms for cabdrivers to compensate themselves for the "tax liability"; in other words, as a cabdriver you shouldn't have to pay this tax out of your own pocket without being fully reimbursed for it from your customer.

"This law was passed as a tax to be paid by the customers, therefore the drivers should not be paying taxes under this law," says

cabdriver Iftekar Khan. Pankaj Kapoor, another cabdriver who frequently works at the airport agrees, "For the cabdrivers, [the Airport Departure Tax hike] doesn't matter, its not a tax on cabdrivers, it's a tax on the travelling passengers

The state law outlines three different methods that the MPEA can implement in coordination with the City of Chicago to reimburse drivers for the tax. In summary, these options are:

1. Cabdrivers can collect

another mechanism created by the MPEA in order to collect compensation

The MPEA determined (in conjunction with the City and State) that "Option 2" above was the best

exacerbated when cabdrivers get fares to neighborhoods on the northwest/southwest side where its nearly impossible to find another fare, or when they get a fare to the suburbs where it is illegal for them to find another fare. In these situations obviously it is better for a cabdriver to go back to O'Hare/Midway without a fare.

Meanwhile there are some cabdrivers who take fares to O'Hare or Midway and then turn around and go back to the neighborhoods or downtown areas they prefer to work in- and they are collecting \$2 compensation from customers despite never having purchased any \$4 Airport Stamps. After all, it has never been in question by any governmental entity that (other than maintaining the underserved areas rule) cabdrivers may work whichever neighborhoods, cabstands, or airports they choose to.

Frustrated with losing \$2 with every subsequent short trip to collar suburbs and the neighborhoods near the airport, Valery Simanuyez says "In case of short trips we lose two



**"In case of short trips we lose two dollars every time- it would be better if we get a special [discounted] short trip stamp so we stop losing money."**

**-Valery Simanuyez**

**"This law was passed as a tax to be paid by the customers, therefore the drivers should not be paying taxes under this law"** -Iftekar Khan



**"What is happening is the cabdriver is subsidizing the passenger's tax out of his own pocket."**

**-Pankaj Kapoor**

who take ground transportation."

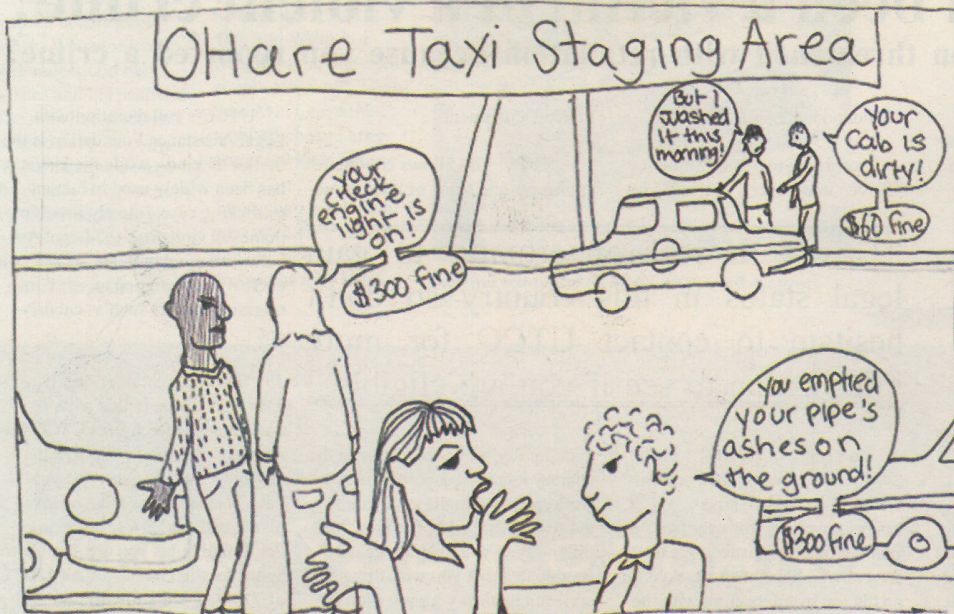
"Cabdrivers who don't take a passenger to the airport and buy a four dollar stamp only get compensated two dollars for it," says Kapoor. "What is happening is the cabdriver is subsidizing the passenger's tax out of his own pocket."

- 100% (or \$4) reimbursement via "Extras" at the end of a trip originating at airports
2. Cabdrivers can collect 50% (or \$2) reimbursement on all trips to the airports and collect the other 50% (or \$2) reimbursement on trips originating at the airports
3. Cabdrivers can use

means for cabdrivers to be compensated, resulting in the broken system currently in place.

Instead of being fully compensated, many cabdrivers are only being compensated for 50% of what they've paid, due to the fact that often cabdrivers arrive at the airport without a fare. This issue is particularly

CONT. ON PAGE 5



# Airport Departure Tax

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

dollars every time- it would be better if we get a special [discounted] short trip stamp so we stop losing money."

The MPEA's system for compensating drivers ignores the reality that a large number of cabdrivers enter O'Hare airport empty, either by choice or because they have few other options. The reality is that whether it was \$2 or \$4 stamp, most cabdrivers who regularly work O'Hare and Midway are losing significant amounts of money every day, and the cause of this is the MPEA's flawed system of compensation.

### Chicago's Uniquely Unjust System

UTCC conducted extensive research on 16 cities around the United States to study how similar airport departure taxes (or airport tolls, use fees, etc) work. Our findings are eye opening:

Out of 16 cities studied, 14 had some form of Airport Departure Taxes-

New York and Atlanta are notable exceptions as cities that don't assess any type of tax to cabdrivers when they pick up fares from airports. Here are a few examples of how such taxes are assessed in different cities:

San Jose has a \$1.50 tax assessed to drivers upon departure from the airport. They are given

Cabdrivers also receive an additional \$1.50 from passengers entering the airport that is theirs to keep. A minimum of \$15.00 is assessed on all short trips.

In Philadelphia \$1.50 is collected from drivers electronically in the form of a pre-paid Easy Pass Card. Drivers receive full reimbursement as an extra on the meter from passen-

Drivers in Houston purchase a bulk of 10 tokens valued at \$2.75 at George H. W. Bush International Airport and use one every time they exit the holding line to pick up a passenger. Drivers are reimbursed in full (\$2.75) by the passengers upon departure from the airport.

Of the 14 cities that do have some form of Airport

the time of their lease payment.

As evidenced above, some cities even allow cabdrivers an extra surcharge for airport trips in addition to a reimbursement. Chicago is the ONLY city nationwide that does not guarantee 100% compensation to its cabdrivers.

We need to change this unjust system!

"Because drivers lack unity and respect for each other, I think this law can never be changed, unless we change ourselves," says cabdriver Ahmad Askar as he waits at the O'Hare Staging Area.

We need every cabdriver affected by this unjust law to get involved and be the change- so we can change this law! We can't do it alone, but TOGETHER WE

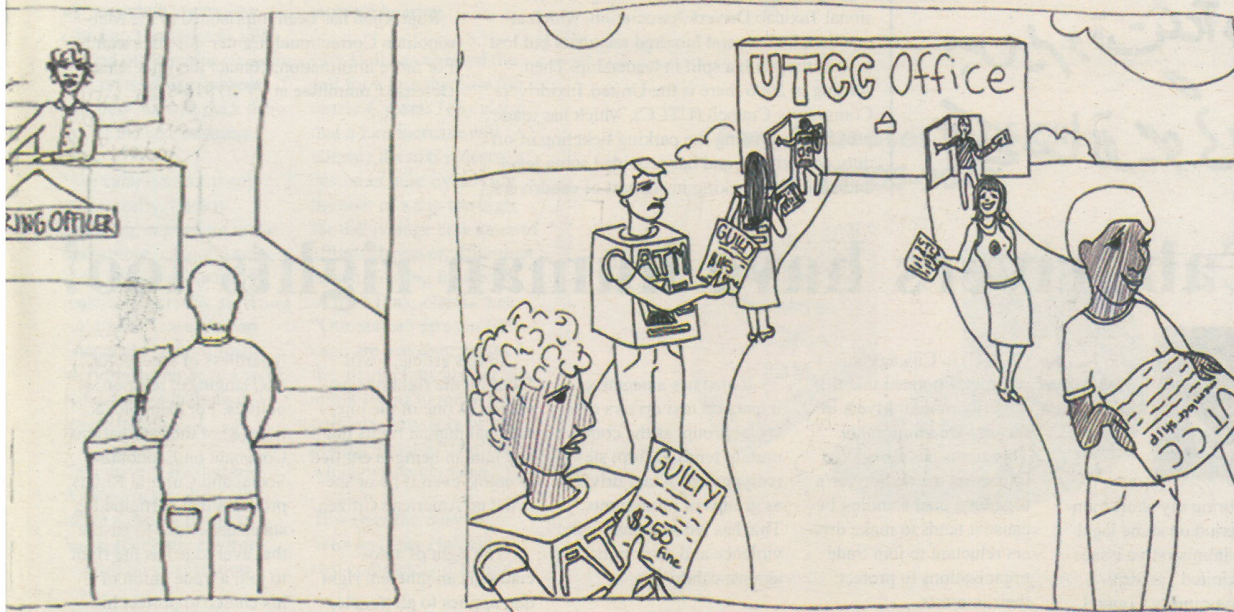
CAN DO IT! Call us at 773-342-8822 or email at [info@goutcc.org](mailto:info@goutcc.org).

Airport Tax Collection in Major US Cities				
Cities	Amount of Tax	Time of Reimbursement	Type of Collection	Name of Tax
Boston	\$4.50	Departure	Electronic/Toll	Massport Toll
Chicago	\$4.00	Arrival/Departure	Tax Stamp	Airport Departure Tax
Denver	\$3.75	Departure	Electronic	Gate Fee
Minneapolis	\$3.50	Lease Remittance	Lease	Trip Fee
Houston George Bush	\$2.75	Departure	Token	Entrance Fee
Houston Hobby	\$1.25	Departure	Token	Entrance Fee
Los Angeles	\$2.50	Departure	Tax Stamp	Airport Departure Tax
Miami	\$2.00	Departure	Token	Airport Fee
San Francisco	\$2.00	Departure	Electronic	Airport Trip Fee
Las Vegas	\$1.80	Departure	Electronic	Taxi Authority Fee
Philadelphia	\$1.50	Departure	Electronic	Departure Tax
San Jose	\$1.50	Departure	Entrance Fee	Entrance Fee

full reimbursement from passengers in the form of a higher flag pull rate for trips originating at the airport. In other words, while the meter normally starts at \$3.50, it starts at \$5.00 for trips starting at the airport.

Departure Taxes, 11 cities compensated cabdrivers 100% at departure, while in 2 cities, Minneapolis and Dallas/Fort Worth, cabdrivers collect reimbursements throughout their leasing period and then pay them at

Departure Taxes, 11 cities compensated cabdrivers 100% at departure, while in 2 cities, Minneapolis and Dallas/Fort Worth, cabdrivers collect reimbursements throughout their leasing period and then pay them at



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AB کی راپور بھائی  
UTCC  
کو جوائنٹ  
سرو

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سید وسیم مبارک  
۱۸ سال سے AB چلا  
رہا ہوں اور UTCC  
کا ممبر ہوں آپکو جب

بھی کوئی پراہم  
پیش آنے کی سنی ہے  
ساتھ UTCC کو آپ

اپنے ساتھ یا نہیں  
کچھ گہری میں لڑا  
میں یہ وقت ہے  
آپکے ساتھ بیوی

## Raja Khan's Arrest

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

been someone with a grievance who set him up.

"It must be a misunderstanding," said Bill Burns, a cabdriver for 36 years and a good friend of Khan's. He admired the "mutual respect and affection" shared by Khan and his wife Diane, a longtime friend.

Diane met Khan at a Pakistani restaurant on Clark near Grand in 1991. She was just starting off as a cabdriver and he was kind enough to let her join the CB network of drivers who helped each other out. She went on to marry Raja and drive a cab until five years ago, when Raja supported the family so she could devote full time to her job as an advocate for affordable housing.

"He's too generous," Diane said, and described examples of his helping people, like changing a tire for a friend with a back problem, or helping three young girls who couldn't find their connecting flight, running with them to their gate, and rushing back for his own flight. And he always gives two and a half per cent of his income to charity, as proscribed in the Koran, she said. He gives regularly to Apna Ghar, a safe way house for women and children in Uptown.

He has been involved in trying to organize taxicab drivers for the past 20 years, she said. First there was the Asian American Cabdrivers Association, launched in 1990, that attempted to bargain with the city for the next several years. Then in 1997 there was the Chicago Professional Taxicab Drivers Association, which at one time had several hundred members but lost momentum with a split in leadership. Then, starting in 2006 there is the United Taxidivers Community Council (UTCC), which has made progress in slowing the parking ticketing of off duty cab drivers, and has provided some legal and academic backing in support of cabdrivers.

Raja was born in Jamoi, a small village in what India calls POK, or Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, and Pakistan calls AJK, or Azad Jammu Kashmir. He was working on a Greek freighter when he met his first wife, Eva, while docked in Guatemala, his daughter Fatima recalls. They were married the following year and had three children, Fatima, Raja and Omar.

Fatima describes how he paid for their education at a good school, and was a "Mr. Mom" for them when needed, driving them to school and cooking meals. She said he tries to attend a family reunion near his home town every year, and always feeds the poor and brings suitcases of cloths and toys. She remembers him helping

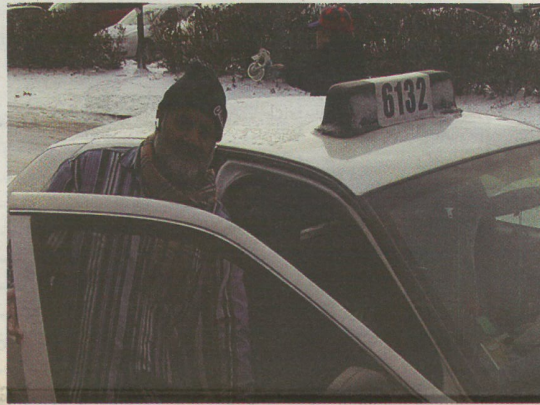
a schoolteacher neighbor build an addition to his home, and donating 30 sewing machines to a girl's school. She notes that her mother, while long divorced, thinks the charges against Raja are impossible.

His friend Bill Burns goes further. He

believes the charges are the result of an exaggerated fear, like the witch hunts of colonial days and the communist hunts of the McCarthy era. What most concerns him, he says, is the fear the arrest has caused. The lesson is "Anybody who steps out, tries to do something for the people back home, may find themselves ensnared."

"He's a solid and stable man who cares for the poor," he added. "If I needed someone to protect my back I'd pick him."

Raja Khan has been imprisoned in the Metropolitan Correctional Center for six months. For more information, contact the Raja Khan Defense Committee at (773) 910-8786



## Cabdrivers have human rights too!



By (UTCC) in Chicago this summer, I noticed that the majority of taxi drivers in the city are immigrants.

During my short training period on some legal and administrative issues with United Taxidivers Community Council

This status has a negative impact on the taxi driver's organizational standing because it tends to make drivers reluctant to join trade organizations to protect their interests.

It also has a negative impact on taxi drivers as a social group, as the community tends to form stereotypes about taxi drivers as groups of immigrants. This has led to unjustified violence and discrimination against cabdrivers.

In this article, I will focus on the right of association as one of the international human rights that any human being is entitled to enjoy, even if he or she is not an American Citizen.

The right of association is an inherent right that applies to all people,

regardless of race, color, sex, language, religion, or politics. For example, article (8) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, provides that participating states undertake to ensure that everyone has the right to join a trade union of his choice to protect his

CONT. ON PAGE 8

# Taxation without representation:

## Cabdrivers angry over proposed \$1 tax surcharge, delays on a real fare increase

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Alderman Burke made “no apologies for reserving all the money for the city treasury and not a cent for struggling cabbies, who have petitioned the City Council for a 22 percent fare hike.”

### Harsh Economic Realities

In October, the UTCC conducted a study on the fare rates applied to 24 major US cities. The results were appalling: Despite Chicago’s place as the 3rd largest city in the United States, it ranked 20th in fare rates. For an average trip (5 miles/5 minutes) drivers in significantly smaller cities such as Baltimore and Cleveland received almost \$2 more than drivers in Chicago. In San Diego, drivers received nearly \$6 more per trip.

Of the 24 cities sampled, 16 of them had implemented some form of a fare increase since the year 2006.

Historically, fare increases have resulted in band-aid solutions that are often coupled with legislation that adds additional financial burdens on taxi drivers; such as a fuel surcharge that was coupled with the tripling of fines at 400 W. Superior and the removal of key suburbs from meter and a half zones. As Chicago continues to fall behind other major cities in fare rates, drivers wonder if this new tax will push them out of the taxi business.

“We cannot make it anymore, really, frankly speaking, we cannot make it anymore... I got four kids, a wife, and a mortgage... I’m really suffering right now,” says Hassan Sadaquah. “I am already working seven days a week and I am not making it, I swear to god...”

Taxi drivers are finding it increasingly difficult to make a decent living in a harsh economic environment. This desperation

is exasperated by a City Council that has been consistently rejecting fare increases for nearly six years while simultaneously imposing new taxes, fees, and fines that drivers pay.

The tax proposal is insensitive to the harsh and very real economic crisis facing cab drivers. When explaining the reasoning for assessing the \$1 tax, Alderman Burke said, “these are tough times. We’ve got to pay policemen and firemen and take care of injured policemen and firemen... It’s one way we can quickly get a pretty substantial amount of money without a great deal of pain.”

A poor economic climate coupled with a city government that does not take drivers’ financial struggles seriously has left many drivers wondering how much worse their situation will become. “A lot of us work over 14 to 16 hours a day I mean what’s next- are you going to sleep in your taxi, working 24 -7,” says Mohamad Aljoi. “I mean this is crazy.”

### Hypocrisy

The \$1 tax proposal comes nearly 4 weeks after the Transportation and Public Way Committee held a fare increase hearing.

City Hall has rejected the call for a fare increase for nearly 6 years. They claim that a fare increase will alienate the taxi industry’s customer base by driving the cost of a trip too high for the average consumer to afford. However, Alderman Burke, arguing in support of the \$1 tax, claims that, “Our taxicab fares in Chicago are less than most of the major cities in America and it seems to me to be a painless, easy way of generating about \$70 million, which we sorely need,”

This begs the question. Why has City Hall taken two completely different

stances on issues regarding meter rates? They reject fare increases that would provide economic relief to cab drivers while simulta-

neously claiming that fare rates are so low that a \$1 tax would have no negative impact on drivers and consumers alike.

### The City’s ATM?

“If the city of Chicago has

CONT. ON PAGE 8

**“If the city of Chicago has shortages with the budget, I don’t think they need to target those with the lowest income, the working class of Chicago”**

**-Mohamad Aljoi**



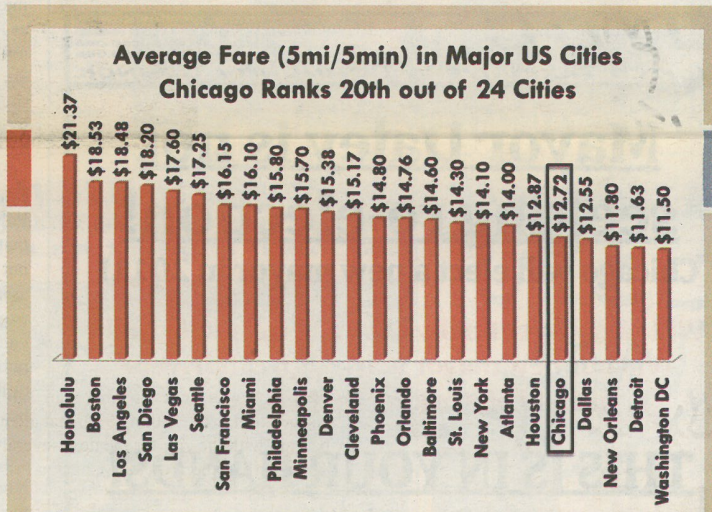
**“I am already working 7 days a week and I am not making it, I swear to god... I think I should quit.”**

**-Hassan Sadaquah**



**“This will horribly affect my income. I am already having a hard time making it- Now I have to collect money for the city too?”**

**-Saied Sarvinehbaghi**



## Taxation without representation: \$1 Tax Surcharge angers cabdrivers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

shortages with the budget I don't think they need to target those with the lowest income, the working class of Chicago," says Mohamad Aljoi, a Chicago cab driver.

Drivers are frustrated that they are being consistently used to provide revenue for the City. Already faced with the burden of applying a \$4 Airport Departure Tax, drivers see this \$1 tax proposal as yet another way for the City to use the taxi industry for their financial gain with little regard for the negative impact it has on drivers.

A University of Illinois study has shown that drivers make between \$4.38 and \$6.79 per hour, which is below minimum wage. With wages so low, it is an insult to reject a fare increase proposal while simultaneously applying a tax that would serve no benefit to drivers.

"This will horribly affect my income. I

am already having a hard time making it," says Saied Sarvinehbaghi, a Chicago taxi driver. "Now I have to collect money for the city too?"

### A Call to Action

We urge all drivers to voice their concerns with the proposed \$1 tax. City Hall thinks that it can act on this proposal without consequences. We need to create a united front to show them that they cannot push this legislation through without resistance. Call on the Alderman presenting this legislation and voice your displeasure with this unjust proposal.

You can contact Alderman Burke's ward office at 773-471-1414 and the City Hall office at 312-744-3380. You can contact Alderman Austin's Ward Office at 773-928-6961 and her City Hall Office at 312-744-6820.

## A wave of violence

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

to justice, inadvertently] few cab drivers will be interested to carry any passengers to this neighborhood on the south side of Chicago irrespective to good or bad customers. The cause of this is not segregation or racial feeling... It is a question of life risk of cabdrivers.

In consequence, the innocent public at south side get troubles for their transportation by Taxicab. Furthermore, if two young school going boys will continue to do such crimes at their early

ages, what would be in [their] future? Is it not a matter of concern for this city? These criminals should/must be brought in to justice at any cost...

I, on behalf of all other cab drivers including these victimized ten drivers, request your good selves to be kind enough to approach the City of Chicago and other news media to take appropriate needful actions.

Kris Sahoo, Chicago Cabdriver

## Cabdrivers have human rights too!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

or her economic and social interests without restrictions, as long as that exercise does not conflict with the laws that are necessary in a democratic society or infringe on the freedoms and rights of others.

Also the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights emphasizes that any restrictions should not impose on the rights of association as long as that exercise is not incompatible with the national security or public safety or public order or the protection of public health or morals.

Additionally, international human rights law recognizes the right of work and protection of human beings regardless of his or her national origin. Accordingly, immigrants and refugees in the United States of America, including taxi drivers, have the same rights.

The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990. It recognizes the immigrants' right of association, and their right to enjoy equality of treatment with citizens of the host states, without distinction of any kind or threat of exclusion.

The United Taxidivers

Community Council (UTCC) aims to unite the taxi drivers of Chicago in a strong organization to defend their interests. For instance, article (2) of the bylaws of UTCC provides that the purpose of the organization is "To provide assistance to taxi drivers in enforcing their rights..." such as, economic, legal, social, and civil rights, in addition to working towards the economic progress and improved social welfare of taxi drivers.

The above purposes are legitimate objectives which constitute an integral part of international human rights included in covenants, conventions, and principles. Therefore, the organization's purpose is consistent with the American democratic system. The United States of America is part of the international community and has ratified treaties on human rights which guarantee the right to freedom of association, without distinction based on race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national or social origin or birth.

Thus, all taxi drivers in Chicago have the right to join the United Taxidivers Community Council or any other form of union to promote and protect their interests.

(Mr Mohamedain is a student at Indiana University School of Law)

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UNITED TAXIDRIVERS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## Mayor Daley is not seeking re-election!

Chicago will elect a new mayor in 2011!

Will cabdrivers finally have a voice at City Hall?  
Will our new mayor work with cabdrivers instead of working against them?

## THIS IS IN YOUR HANDS!

Now is the time to get involved with UTCC's efforts to reform the taxi industry- Even if you cannot vote, you can help!

Get involved with UTCC!  
312-342-UTCC (8822)

American Friends Service Committee, Community Ally

Visit UTCC's Office!  
2040 N Milwaukee Ave / 2nd Floor  
Office Hours: Mon - Wed / 1pm-7pm  
Phone: 773-342-8822