

SACRAMENTO COUNTY TAXPAYERS LEAGUE PERSPECTIVE

PROMOTING ACCOUNTABILITY, EFFICIENCY AND ECONOMY IN GOVERNMENT—SINCE 1961



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Banning Junk Food at the State

By Katy Grimes

"Vending machine owners said that fruit, nuts and other 'healthy and sustainable foods' don't sell, and they end up throwing it out."

Another ridiculous bill is traveling through the Legislature which would kill more small businesses in California because Big Brother wants you to lose weight. AB 727 authored by Assemblywoman Holly Mitchell, D-Los Angeles, would require 50 percent of the food sold in vending machines in state buildings to meet federal nutritional standards, and by 2016, 100 percent. California is crumbling under the weight of an ever expanding government, irresponsible and condescending legislators, and not because of the waistlines of state employees and school children. Mitchell's website states, "As part of the First Lady's Let's Move Initiative...California plans to help lead the effort in creating healthier environments by adopting a similar food

procurement strategy for its cafeterias, office buildings, and vending machines." California is leading the effort in whacky laws and infringements on individual rights and liberties. The current requirement for healthy food in vending machines in the state is already a whopping 35 percent. According to several vending machine owners who testified at today's hearing in the Senate Health Committee, the healthy food requirement has cut severely into their tiny

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Historically, as you may know, the Auburn Dam Council (ADC) is a “sister” organization of the League. So, on Monday afternoon June 20th, three of us from the ADC drove to Placerville to attend a regularly-scheduled meeting of the American River Authority (ARA). (Coincidentally, two of Congressman McClintock’s staff also attended that day.) The ARA was created as a joint powers agency to oversee the building of the Auburn Dam. One of the last agenda items that day had to do with the future of the ARA [in light of the fact that the water right had been revoked from the Bureau of Reclamation and that there didn’t seem to be any progress on the project in recent years]. However, during the public comment phase on that item, Norman Gonzales, from Congressman McClintock’s office, came forward to speak about the Congressman’s intense interest in this project, as Chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Natural Resources Committee. After Norman spoke, Ron Briggs, the ARA Chairman, stated that there was majority Board support for the Auburn Dam project. At that point, I stepped up to the podium, as Chair of the Auburn Dam Council, and spoke about how the coalition of Auburn Dam supporters was still growing. For example, I pointed to the Northern California Power Agency, who estimates a net revenue of over \$120 million a year from electric power generation, alone. Here, I might add that the Congressman’s support has created the most positive climate in years for the Dam! Thank you Congressman McClintock! In closing, I stated that I hoped that the ARA would participate with the rest of the coalition to move the project forward and thanked them for their years of service.

At our last ADC meeting, Friday, July 1, 2011, our guest speaker was Rick Johnson, Executive Director of the Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, speaking on the nearly \$400 million Natomas Basin levee repair project. Please join us sometime for one of our meetings, as our coalition continues to grow.

Ken

*The League's Board meets once a month
(except August and December)
12:00pm-1:15pm, third Thursday,
at College Town Denny's (near HWY 50 and Howe Ave)
Guests are welcome to attend.*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Project Labor Agreements

On June 9, 2011, myself and eight other speakers testified in favor of 'Fair and Open Competition' for building projects in the Sacramento region, allowing for the best qualified bids to get the jobs. The Taxpayers League has been a long time supporter of this process, having gone on record on several occasions in past years opposing project labor agreements (PLA's). Basically, PLA's can be considered political giveaways, repaying labor unions for generous donations to political campaigns. It just doesn't make good fiscal sense for elected officials to lock into PLA's when work can be done at lower costs, with far more contractors to choose from. The Taxpayers League will continue to support WECA (Western Electrical Contractors Association), and other groups that support Fair and Open Competition.



Bob Blymyer
Executive Director

County Budget Deficit

When Interim County Executive Steve Szalay came on board in December of 2009, he was given the rather large task of fixing the County Budget - a budget that was going downhill fast. One of his initial tasks was to set up a budget deficit citizens advisory committee, of which I have been a participant. The county has a total budget of about \$3.5 Billion, with \$2 billion of that going to the general fund. Mr. Szalay inherited some massive problems; in 2002, County employees were given large benefit/pension package increases (even though actuaries said they couldn't afford it); in 2005-06, when times were good, the former County Exec and the Board of Supervisors entered into five-year contracts with the public unions that included equity increases and COLA's for each year. Needless to say, within a couple of years, revenue could no longer cover those increases. In addition, in 2005, the County had almost 14,000 employees. Over the last couple of years several staff positions have been eliminated (down to about 11,500 today), and several County departments have been consolidated, offering many efficiency improvements. The budget deficit, which began at \$181 Million, was reduced down to under \$70 Million over the last 18 months. In addition, new contracts were negotiated with the bargaining units; allowing for basically no increases for the next three years, lower-tier retirement packages for new hires, and eliminating some of the health care goodies previously given to retirees. There is still a long ways to go. There will be continued efforts to contract out more County services to non-civil service employees (wherever reasonable), consolidate some service functions with the City of Sacramento, other incorporated cities, and special districts (ie; animal care, parking lots, etc), and more streamlining of the organization chart. One thing's for sure; as Mr Szalay leaves the County this month, he leaves it in far better shape than when he arrived. The new man, Brad Hudson, arrives on August 14.

2011 Annual Dinner (50th anniversary)

This year's Annual Dinner was a huge success, probably the best in over a decade. The focal point was the celebration of the League's 50th anniversary, with California's top political columnist Dan Walters as the keynote speaker. And Mr Walters did not disappoint - spending about 30 minutes summarizing the horror stories of the past decades of California's state government. For the 50-year celebration, five past SCTL presidents spoke briefly about their role in past years; Bill Hirschfelt (#10), Neil Paschall (#21), Lory Saxton (#24), Jon Coupal (#25), Joe Sullivan (#26 and 28), Ken Payne (#29 and current presiding officer). The League also proudly awarded certificates of continued membership to long-time members; John O. Bronson Co. and Raley's Supermarkets (48 years), Grebitus and Sons Jewelers (42 years), Rental Housing Association (28 years). In addition, President Ken Payne presented a "Taxpayer of the Year" award to League V.P. Craig Powell for his outstanding work in heading up the Measure B campaign (Utilities Rate Rollback) during most of 2010.

Former League Presidents Pass On

Two outstanding members of the community, who also happened to be past presidents of the SCTL, passed on during the month of June. Tom Richards, Jr. was General Manager of Bercut-Richards Packing Co. (founded by his father), as well as a rancher who raised cattle and horses. He was active in the community; VP of the California Chamber of Commerce, and a director of the Sacramento Metro Chamber, appointed by Governor Edmund G. Brown to the California Fish & Game Commission. He also was a director of the Boy Scouts of America. Mr Richards served as the League's 4th president in 1964.

Joseph Harlan was the senior VP for finance and operations at Weinstocks, and was active with the Sacramento Metro Chamber and the Sacramento Symphony Association. Mr. Harlan moved to the Broadway Southwest Division in Phoenix in 1979, and retired as CEO. He served as the League's 8th president in 1969.

Banning Junk Food at the State

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profits. Vending machine owners said that fruit, nuts and other “healthy and sustainable foods” don’t sell, and they end up throwing it out. This is a cost to vending machine owners that comes right out of their pockets, thanks to the nuts in the Legislature. But Mitchell insisted at the hearing that her bill is the start of a culture shift, similar to smoking cessation programs, and even child car safety seats. She indicated that the “public health crisis” is justification enough for this bill, which has absolutely nothing to do with how fit or fat state workers are. They will instead just start bringing more fatty snack foods to work in their lunch boxes.

Los Angeles County passed an ordinance that requires that 100 percent of the food in vending machines in county buildings to meet the federal health guidelines. California schools are also required schools to sell “healthy” foods in cafeterias and in vending machines. Mitchell commented on how well it this has worked, and did not result in revenue loss to school districts. But many real health experts say that the federal health guidelines are a sham and are what has created so much obesity and a taste for fat across the country... that, and maybe that public schools have cut dodge ball during recess and can’t be bothered with P.E. anymore. School kids have never been more obese than they are right now. Instead of providing kids the opportunity for team play and the benefits of a little exercise, self-discipline and competition, monkey bars have been deemed too dangerous and dodge ball is mean. Mitchell insisted that limiting choices of state employees will go a long way to helping them become healthier – as well as considering “the greater collective good” for Californians.

Sen. Tony Strickland, R-Simi Valley, asked Mitchell if Californians “are not smart enough to make food purchases.” Mitchell said she was not trying to save the world, and reiterated that she was limiting her bill to vending machines on state property only. Both cigarettes and food are “lethal, lethal weapons if misused” according to Mitchell. This bill proves that the California Legislature should be part-time. Legislators like Mitchell and bad bills like AB 727 do more damage than good by putting hard working, small business men and women out of work under the guise of saving others. This is how and why lawmakers are accused of picking and choosing winners while California rapidly disintegrates.

Condescending, busy-body legislators are ruining California. Whether rewriting state history, ordering bans on soft drinks and plastic bags, or trying to dictate health insurance company’s premiums, California legislators are one of the most out-of-control, pompous and irresponsible governing bodies in the country.

Limiting candy bar choices in vending machines will do nothing to help obese state employees lose weight, and in fact, will only make them despise Assemblywoman Holly Mitchell when the Three-Muskateers candy bar has been replaced by an aging, bruised apple or a cardboard-flavored granola bar.

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