



MISSION VIEJO BUZZ

Keeping the California Promise

Week of July 22, 2006

The Patriot Post Founders' Quote Daily

"In politics, as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution."

-- Alexander Hamilton (Federalist No. 1, 27 October 1787)

Reference: Hamilton, Federalist No. 1.

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A FAILURE TO LEAD STAFF EDITORIAL

After the media's hammering of Capo school district administrators, Councilwoman Trish Kelley has distanced herself from Supt. James Fleming and the trustees. Perhaps Kelley feels she can no longer associate with "damaged goods".



With each morning's paper bringing new CUSD turmoil to light, South County has a scandal to call its own. Beyond issues that fueled an attempt to recall all seven (7) trustees, the district is accused of keeping an Enemies List of parents involved in the recall effort. Additionally, CUSD administrators apparently looked at recall petition signatures they were legally prevented from seeing.



Weeks of bad press changed a lot of things, but Kelley's love-fest with her school

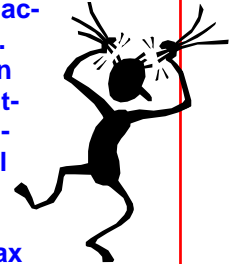
board buddies may have continued if she weren't up for reelection in November.

Kelley took the oath of office to serve the city, but her votes and other activities have been directly tied to

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benefiting CUSD's administration. Her community service prior to her council election centered on volunteerism, and she campaigned on serving as a PTA president. Ironically, her school board connections as a council member cost the city without giving much help to the schools.

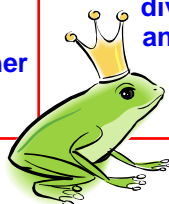
CUSD parents have expressed their frustration at raising funds, only to see the money replacing rather than adding to district funding. The issue came to a head on April 3 when three council members asked for accountability in the form of an audit of taxes collected in Mission Viejo for CUSD. Council members said they were responding to requests from parents to investigate the decline of school facilities – how much tax money has been collected and where it's been spent.



Rather than analyzing the problems and demanding solutions, most parents have chosen not to make waves. Kelley appeared to be among those who believed the best way to get anything was to become friendly with the administration and trust the trustees.



Over a period of years, CUSD Supt. James Fleming divided Mission Viejo on a variety of issues, and parents were disadvantaged as a result of being divided. Instead of challenging



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Oh dear, Oh dear, as election draws near
I'm in over my head; I can't help but dread
Come November, they will remember
My fallacious decisions;
Have already cost this city millions!

administrators gone awry, Kelley sided with them. She's now in limbo, unable to align with the embattled trustees and unable to reconcile the difference with parents, who are paying a high price for the district's bad decisions. Kelley's attempt to criticize the district for its Enemies List is too little too late.

Soon after Kelley was elected in 2002, a seemingly objective resident said, "Kelley quickly got in over her head. Her supporters who persuaded her to run for office didn't look beyond the election when she'd actually have to serve on the council."

City council should be more than a popularity contest. With an annual budget of \$60 million and responsibility for the city's direction, actual competencies are needed. Kelley apparently lacks an understanding of financial matters, and she has demonstrated a strong tendency to follow instead of lead. CUSD's problems began long ago when Kelley was involved in the PTA. Today's PTA leaders have been at the forefront – researching, looking for answers, demanding accountability – at the risk of having their names on the Enemies List. Except for piling on at the end of the battle, **Kelley has been missing in action.**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LOSING TOUCH OVER PROPERTY RIGHTS

The Orange County Register editorial page staff seems to have lost touch with the bulk of conservatives who are trying to keep south Orange County as one of the best places to live in America or even the world.

The Register is big-time ballyhooing high-rise residential developments in Irvine and north Orange County, with scant corresponding upgrades of streets and infrastructures. This is going to drive even more

Orange County residents to look south to relocate.

With the libertarian view of absolute property rights, the Register strongly opposed successful initiatives in Newport Beach and Yorba Linda, whose residents were fed up with changes in zoning to high-density residential and mixed use. Mission Viejo activists are moving toward a similar initiative. Yorba Linda's 300-vote yes margin held up in the final tally and was certified.

The Register rightfully thinks it is wrong for Brea to intentionally downgrade vacant hillside property to make any development unprofitable. The community is not entitled to enjoy someone else's open space.



But the Register thinks it is just dandy for the city to rezone property to higher density to make instant profit for an investor-buyer, even though the ensuing traffic and congestion, and potentially stress on sewer and water infrastructure can reduce the value of adjacent property and make it unlivable.

As long as the rezoning doesn't involve city subsidies or eminent domain, and the rezoning does not pose health and safety problems, the Register supports high density. If rezoning makes it unlivable for adjacent residents, or chases away customers for adjacent mom and pop businesses, tough.

Apparently, if you don't like it, move. That seems to be the response of the Register. But if eminent domain is involved, the paper rightfully contends a homeowner who doesn't want to move should not be forced out so the city can give the property to a developer.

Allan Pilger
Mission Viejo



BLOOD SHORTAGE, YOU CAN DONATE NOW

As many fellow-activists know, I have been promoting the idea of giving blood once every two months, which I have been doing for more than two years. Southern California

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has a permanent 25 percent shortfall in donations, partially because a higher percentage of major surgeries are performed here. Blood must be imported from surrounding regions.

But now the Red Cross faces the biggest shortage in the Southland in six years. It is probable that elective surgeries are going to be postponed. The supply is grossly inadequate in case of a disaster like an earthquake.

The Red Cross makes it easy now and non-intrusive to become a regular donor (once every 56 days is the maximum). It is done entirely with Internet reminders, no flood of phone calls as donors once received. With the Red Cross collection bank in Laguna Hills and regular collections and hospitals and the Bloodmobile, it is easy to find a convenient time to give blood regardless of your schedule.

The whole collection takes about 30 minutes per person, and the donor can now answer personal health questions on a computer rather than having a worker ask the questions. You need to have a healthy lifestyle to qualify, and there are some questions if you have lived abroad.

There is no one single thing you can do in 30 minutes that could give more help to a person in need than to give blood. Right now, go to <http://www.redcross.org> for more information. You can sign up in a couple of minutes and then return to reading the rest of the blog.



Allan Pilger
Mission Viejo

COMPENSATION PERKS AT CITY HALL

It is interesting to note that staff included the employee compensation numbers as part of the revised budget for the special meeting of July 31, 2006. Have you ever heard of including payroll numbers in advance before they are reviewed and/or approved?

I have reviewed the budget in detail, and there seems to be a disconnect between who drives the train and who is simply aboard for the ride.



What a glorious ride it must be to get payroll increases on autopilot.

The compensation plan should be set aside until after the budget is finished. It should be agendized separately and filtered by our city council so that everyone is on the same page. The checks and balances of our city government should require as much.

Is it too much to ask that our elected leaders do their job and approve payroll separately instead lumping it in with the larger revision of the budget? Where is our leadership for the benefit of taxpayers?

James Edward Woodin
Mission Viejo

THE WAR FOR CONTROL OF CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENTS

The war for control of California's state and local governments is under way. The first major battle, the recall election in 2003, was won by the antigovernment forces led by Arnold Schwarzenegger. The second battle, the "special" initiative election last fall, was won by the pro-government forces led by government employee unions.

The antigovernment- taxpayer forces claim that large government employee unions have taken political control of governments for their collective personal benefit at the expense of taxpayers. The pro-government-tax-user forces claim that taxpayer organizations are trying to punish such government employees as teachers, nurses and others who do critical work.

With this heated war under way, it is worthwhile to take a brief, "big picture" look at a basic cause of this conflict – the size and cost of government employment in California.

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First, how many workers are employed by state and local governments in California? Government data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2003 (the most recent year available) reveal the following fulltime equivalent employment numbers (rounded): state – 389,000; local – 1,416,000; total – 1,800,000. (If fulltime and part-time workers were added separately, the total would be about 2.3 million employees). Local governments total more than 4,400 in number, and local workers include those working for the 58 counties, 475 cities, 1,047 school districts and the 2,830 “special districts.” Special districts include such single-purpose governments as fire protection, transportation, water and environmental districts.

A further breakdown by the Census Bureau of the 1.8-million state and local government employees shows that the five largest employee groups by function are as follows (rounded): education – 896,000 (K-12 – 684,000 and higher education – 212,000); health/hospital – 156,000; police – 101,900; welfare services – 89,000; corrections – 82,600. (The education employees are further divided into instructional vs. non-instructional, with K-12 instructional at 442,000 and higher education instructional employees listed at 63,000.) Most importantly, these five separate employee groups make up more than 70 percent of the total 1.8-million state and local employees.

What size role do government labor unions play in California politics? At last count there were 21 major statewide government employee labor unions that, over time, have had a significant impact on state and local government policy decisions.

These include, for example, more prominent unions like the American Federation of State, County and Municipal employees (AFSCME); the Services Employees International Union (SEIU), representing employees ranging from nurses to janitors; the California Teachers Associations (CTA), representing K-12 teachers; the California Police Officer Association (CPOA); and, the California Professional Firefighters (CPF).

The other 16 unions represent similar or other categories of state and local employees, such as university faculty and state correction officers.

These statewide unions, of course, also have many local chapters identified by the city, county or school district where employees work. All of these unions are also connected to a national union that represents workers and promotes political goals nationally.

Finally, how much do these 1.8 million state and local government employees receive in compensation for the work they perform? Again, using U.S. Census Bureau data, these employees received the following in paid compensation in 2003 (rounded): state workers – \$21.6 billion; local workers – \$74.2 billion; total – \$95.8 billion. In the 2003 state budget year ending June 30, total state and local government revenue collections were approximately \$210 billion from all state and local sources (not counting about \$54 billion in federal revenue). This \$95.8 billion in employee compensation was about 46 percent of total revenue collected by all state and local governments in California that year.

There is no doubt that working conditions for government employees have greatly improved over the past several decades. High salary levels, very good health insurance, legal job protections and excellent retirement pensions make government jobs very attractive, and the labor unions have played a major role in making these improvements a reality. The decades-long costly effort to elect favored politicians and to lobby for supportive and protective legislation has paid off handsomely for the unionized workers.

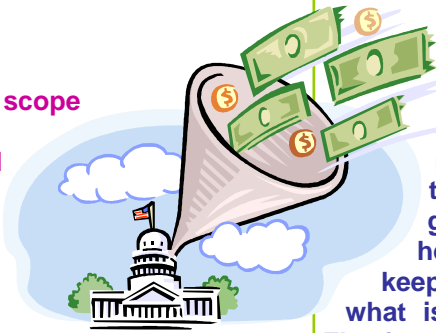
Are there too many government employees? Do they get paid too much or have too many costly benefits? Are employee labor unions too powerful, and do they exert too much influence over elected officials? The voters, of course, will ultimately decide these basic is-

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sues.

The current size and scope of government resulted from incremental growth over many decades. Neither a single election nor the passage or defeat of ballot propositions (or the recall of a governor) will bring an end to this political war. The war between the taxpayers and the tax users – quite likely a long and bitter war – has just begun.

Michael Ferrall, Ph.D.
Mission Viejo



The Buzz July 18

A ceremony to lay the cornerstone for the Norman P. Murray Community and Senior Center expansion will take place Friday, July 28, 10:30 a.m., at 24932 Veterans Way.

Participants in the ceremony will include Councilman John Paul Ledesma, vocalist Diane Nill and Boy Scout Troop 661. Former City Manager Fred Sorsabal will preside, and Saddleback Laguna Lodge No. 672 and the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of California will present a bronze plaque. Groundbreaking for the expansion will take place on Aug. 5.

★★★★★★

Neil Lonsinger and Brian Skalsky are among Mission Viejo residents who have pulled papers to run for city council. Lonsinger has previously run for council, and Skalsky is a newcomer. Others pulling papers thus far include Jim Woodin, Michael Ferrall



and Councilwoman Trish Kelley.

★★★★★★

A year ago during the effort to recall Capo school board trustees, one of the parents said of CUSD Supt. James Fleming, “He has to be a pretty smart guy just to remember all the lies he’s told. He tells different groups of people different things, and he must have a good memory to keep all the stories straight.” In what is certainly old news by now, Fleming resigned on Wednesday, July 19.



★★★★★★



Called by some the liar-in-chief, Fleming was in deep trouble as soon as former CUSD Communications Director David Smollar started spilling the beans to the Or. Co. Register. Smollar in June leaked the Enemies List to OCR, and “the Flem” responded by saying he knew nothing about the list. The trustees publicly backed him, alternately claiming the list didn’t exist or, if it did, everyone at the district had acted properly. On Wed., July 19, the Register revealed Fleming’s laughable claim that the purpose of the list – which he indeed knew about – was to prevent the 150 “enemies” from hacking the district’s computer system.

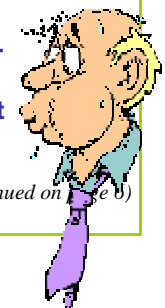
★★★★★★



Parents at the July 11 school board meeting demanded that the trustees fire Fleming. That’s not the way it works at CUSD where Fleming, not the trustees, called the shots. Beyond the P.R. nightmare of an Enemies List and Fleming’s conflicting stories in print, the trustees defended his statements and behavior. After being accused of dishonesty, malfeasance and corruption, the trustees looked foolish as well, and that may have been the last straw.

★★★★★★

Also in hot water is Registrar of Voters Neal Kelley, who now says he illegally allowed CUSD officials to view petition signatures so they “could get a sense of closure.” He had first



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claimed he didn't know it was against the law, but his claim "blew up in his face". At the July 18 meeting of the Board of Supervisors, Fifth Dist. Supv. Tom Wilson still seemed unconcerned, according to some South County residents in the audience. Amid calls for Kelley's resignation, supervisors cautiously approved a study that would outline a potential investigation of the election official's department. County CEO Tom Mauk is expected to have that outline back on the supervisors' agenda by their Aug. 1 meeting.



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As reported in The Buzz last week, OC Superior Court Judge Michael Brenner on July 11 upheld the OC Registrar of Voter's invalidation of recall signatures. One of the parents responded, "Our attorney said that he did not expect us to prevail in Superior Court. He said a judge would not be inclined to make or change the law on his own and that, ultimately, this would have to be won in an appellate court." The group has decided to appeal.

★★★★★★

Mission Viejo residents who are watching planned road improvements east of Antonio Parkway are trying to measure the impact on Crown Valley traffic problems. Some say that the city of Mission Viejo should "hold San Juan Capistrano's feet to the fire" by addressing the matter of Ortega between Antonio and the I-5. A former Mission Viejo planning commissioner is asking about the option to shift Ortega to the Camino Capistrano off-ramp area and create an interchange there. He added, "If we don't press for a solution now, it is hopeless, and Crown Valley will become a parking lot."

★★★★★★

At the July 17 meeting of the Orange County Republican Central Committee, three incumbent CUSD school board members who are up for reelection didn't get the endorsement. According to those who attended the meeting, Councilman Frank Ury was pulling strings with the good ol' boys regarding endorsements for Mission Viejo council incumbents as well. While it might not surprise anyone to hear Council Members Trish



Kelley and Lance MacLean didn't receive the endorsement, Ury allegedly prevented Councilman John Paul Ledesma from getting the endorsement. Ury supposedly is trying to bring in his own council majority since he can't get a second to his motions. Ury might be obligated to the out-of-towners who made big donations to his campaign in 2004. It's hard to pay back all the favors when no one on the current council agrees with him.

"Too bad, so sad"

★★★★★★

"... Joyfulness of the heart is the life of a man ..."



And THAT is the End!