

RNPA Endorses Measure A

OVERVIEW

Over the past four years, the County of Santa Clara has had to close a \$640 million budget gap—a deficit equal to 30% of its \$2.1 billion FY2006 General Fund budget. As a result, the county has had to eliminate 1,200 jobs and make deep services cuts. The result: fewer County services available to its residents. And that's not the end of it. The county is bracing for even deeper cuts as medical and pharmaceutical cost continue to escalate, demand for services grows, and state and federal government funding for mandated programs shrinks. That's why the County Board of Supervisors voted on February 28th to put a ½ cent sales tax on the June ballot. The ballot emphasizes health care, transportation, and housing with fiscal accountability.

STATE AND FEDERAL BUDGET CUTS

State support for mandated health and human services has fallen 16.5% over the last four years. Many of these are safety net services provided to the poor and working poor, under-insured, emancipated youth, disabled, frail and elderly seniors, and those with mental health issues. State cutbacks cost the county federal matching money, compounding the county's financial loss. The county would need an additional \$275 million per year just to return to the level of service provided in the late 1990s, which even then did not meet demand. The latest financial forecast for the county projects deficits for the next four years due to rising medical costs, increased demand for services, and additional reductions in federal support. The 2006-07 federal budget proposes reducing education, health and human services by \$4 billion.

EXPECTED REVENUES

The Board of Supervisors has the authority

to raise the sales tax for undesignated general fund purposes with a majority vote. The passage of this measure will bring the County's sales tax rate to 8.75%, the same as Alameda County. The funds will not be restricted in use in any way through the ballot measure. It is anticipated that the tax will raise approximately \$150-180 million a year for general county services.

WHY SHOULD RNPA MEMBERS VOTE YES ON MEASURE A?

One reason is that Valley Medical Center needs additional revenue.

Last fiscal year, the county allocated more than \$97 million to Valley Medical Center. This year, the county budgeted more than \$106 million. As the county's commitment has increased, federal and state support has decreased. Recently the state announced an agreement with the federal government to lock in Medi-Cal reimbursement levels at 2005 levels for the next five years. The Medi-Cal inpatient per diem has not increased since 1991. That revenue paid less than half of the cost of providing care in 2005.

While the county remains committed to providing services to county residents, particularly to those with no health insurance or other resources, it cannot do so alone. Currently, the county provides more than 80% of the health care provided to patients who have no health insurance, even though there are 11 other acute care hospitals in the county.

When San Jose Medical Center closed

in early 2005, the county hospital had to accommodate nearly twice as many trauma patients and 10,000 more visits to the emergency room than it had in previous years. Just to meet state earthquake safety standards, the county hospital needs an additional \$750 million.

Santa Clara County is already facing a shortage of medical professionals—neurosurgeons, orthopedists, internists, gastroenterologists. If the Medical Center closed or was forced to make deep budget cuts, fewer medical professionals would be trained at the hospital. This would reduce the number of medical professionals trained in the county.

Other services that could be effected that are provided by VMC or the County include:

- Trauma and Emergency Services-911
- VMC Emergency Department
- VMC Burn Center-1 of 4 between Sherman Oaks and Oregon
- Rehab-Spinal and Traumatic Brain Injury—1 of 7 in USA
- NICU
- Public Health Department- lead agency in County if there is a disaster.

RNPA is endorsing this measure because we believe that it will help provide SCVHHS the funding that is necessary to provide care to the community. Your assistance is necessary in insuring this measure passes. Please contact RNPA if you are able to volunteer on this campaign, 292-6061.

National Nurses Week

As we celebrated **National Nurses Week 2006** May 6 - 12, the RNPA salutes nurses across the country and especially our members who work throughout the SCVHHS.

RNPA believes that nurses working throughout the SCVHHS are special. We have the strength to care for a unique patient population by providing compassion and hands-on patient care at the bedside – as we have done throughout the last 100 years.

Moreover, at 1400 members strong, RNPA represents the largest group of professionals in the County. Together we have the

power to achieve changes in our nursing practice as well as wages, hours, and working conditions.

National Nurses Week is a time to thank nurses for what they do and to remind the public just how vital the nation's nurses are to patients, their families and society.

Of course, giving thanks, recognition and acknowledgement is only part of the reason we celebrate National Nurses Week every year. Another equally important reason is to remind the public of nursing's contributions to the health and well-being of the nation.

Thank you for your commitment.



Election 2006: Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors District 4—Excerpt from SJ Mercury News Tuesday, May 16, 2006

District 4 voters can choose from three solid candidates to represent them on the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. San Jose council members Ken Yeager and Linda LeZotte both are well qualified, and Patricia Mahan, while less experienced, also has qualities voters may find attractive.

But Yeager is the best leader. He is the best candidate to help broker what may be painful compromises in the years ahead, if the county's revenue do not improve. A 53-year-old resident of San Jose's Rose Garden, Yeager has spent the past six years representing District 6 on the council.

The fact that he is endorsed by both the South Bay Labor Council and the Silicon Valley Chamber of Commerce speaks volumes about his ability to reach out to a wide range of constituents.

LeZotte, 57, an attorney, is well respected for her representation of West San Jose for the past seven years. Smart and always up on the issues, she has been a consistent advocate for high ethical standards, open government and environmental causes such as green building. She has never been shy about standing up to the mayor and the council majority. Her positions on the major county issues are not significantly different from Yeager's, although she would focus more on transportation, while Yeager's main concern is health and human services.

Mahan, 53, comes from a longtime politically active family. She was elected to the Santa Clara council in 1994 and has been mayor since 2002.

District 4, which covers Santa Clara, Campbell and West San Jose, will be in good hands regardless of who wins this intriguing race.

Address Change

Please remember to notify RNPA if you have moved. Many members are under the assumption that we receive this information from the County, but unfortunately we do not....Thank you!

Tuition Reimbursement

If you changed your mind about attending a class, please call Tuition Reimbursement (TR) as soon as possible to inform them that you are no longer attending the class. Any unused money will be returned into the fund which can be used by other employees, TR # 299-6856. TR is exhausted for the fourth quarter. A new window will open July 1, 2006. Professional Development is available through RNPA.

Book Sale

California Nursing Practice Act 2006 Edition is on sale for \$12 at the RNPA Office. Deadline June 1.