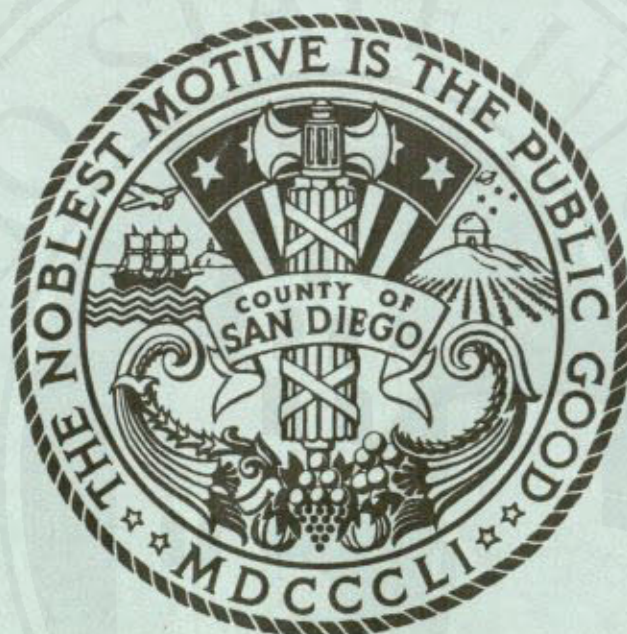


1985 STATE OF THE COUNTY MESSAGE



LEON L. WILLIAMS
Chairman, Board of Supervisors

JANUARY 15, 1985

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LEON L. WILLIAMS, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO
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Good morning. May I first wish my fellow Board members, county staff and all citizens of San Diego County a happy and prosperous new year.

We begin 1985 with a clear message from the voters to make government work. Proposition A passed by substantial margins in every Supervisorial district after a year of almost unprecedented attention to county issues and problems. We have a new Board of Supervisors, elected, for the most part, upon promises to improve county government.

The buck has found a place to stop. It stops here.

Because voters trusted what we had to say they are trusting us now to accomplish what we said we would. At no time are our opportunities greater nor expectations higher than now. The public expects this Board to provide cohesive leadership and policy direction. We need to foster not just the image, but create the reality, of a Board of Supervisors which is a deliberative, thoughtful, unified lawmaking and policy setting body. Our responsibility is to govern, not to win plaudits at the expense of each other, the staff or the public.

That is not to say there should be no differences among us. This Board represents a cross section of ideologies and concerns, and that should and will be our strength! It will be my goal as Chairman to facilitate the ability of each Supervisor to represent his or her constituency and to provide an open and even-handed forum for the discussions of our programs.

I see 1985 as a year of partnerships. Partnerships with the public, County employees, the private sector, and other cities and governments.

We now have the opportunity to establish new traditions that will move us through the last half of this decade and beyond. We can create the cooperative, creative working environment Board members, the Chief Administrative Officer and staff need to face new challenges.

Soon the Board will approve a new policy to implement the non-interference provision of Proposition A. This policy will not hamper us. It will free us to pursue policy issues and improve our ability to respond to citizen needs while remaining confident that the daily operations of county government are running smoothly.

Today we will consider changes in our agenda procedure and the agenda itself which should make our meetings less mysterious for the the public and the Board. These changes will focus accountability for county operations on the CAO and Board, not individual department heads, in keeping with the Proposition A mandate.

Following the success of our meetings in north county last year, the Board will attempt to meet in different parts of the county on issues of particular interest to a community and we may schedule evening meetings in this chamber on issues of broad public concern to allow the greatest public input into our decision making process. And we will seek continued use of the teleconferencing format that highlighted the last meeting of the Board in 1984. Additionally, television coverage of the Board will be extended and the quality of broadcasting improved.

This new beginning for our county government comes at the right time. San Diego is the fastest growing metropolitan area in the state. With that growth comes incessant demands upon our resources, our citizens and our governments. We cannot turn away the growth or ignore the problems growth brings.

We must, of course, continue to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of life that makes San Diego County unique. These are regional concerns which transcend political boundaries. We are a regional family and what affects one of us surely will affect us all.

Last year the County took initial steps toward major regional issues that will be on the County's agenda this year and in future years.

-- Perhaps most important is the move by the County to rejoin the San Diego Association of Governments. With our membership in SANDAG the County assumes its proper regional role among the 16 cities in a partnership that finds us cooperatively seeking solutions to common problems.

-- We begin the first full year of what could be the most sophisticated, state-of-the-art network of trauma centers in the United States. This will be a time of fine tuning and careful observation. The County will monitor these facilities to determine the level of adherence to strict standards and maintain accessibility to everyone who needs this critical care, regardless of income or location.

-- Harbor Square, the development plan that will turn the County's wasted parking lots into a civic bayside showplace that allows private enterprise to provide public facilities, will enter a critical stage of approval by local governments and the coastal commission.

-- In 1985 we must adopt an affirmative action plan that does more than just meet the objectives of the consent decree. It must encourage careers in county government and create a middle management pool of qualified persons who can be promoted. Some progress was made last year through the findings and recommendations of the State Personnel Board and the hiring of a new director of Office of Employee Services.

-- The development of Otay Mesa will continue to hold the key to the future economic progress of the South Bay. As the international gateway to the United States, Otay Mesa presents an unprecedented opportunity for city-county cooperation that will benefit the entire region.

-- Delayed by the problems of the Telink case, we will move this year toward the establishment of a new telecommunications system which could save the county millions of dollars and increase efficiency.

Most of what we want to do, depends, of course, upon our ability to pay for it. Despite the attention given to this problem last year by the Governor and the Legislature, county government still has little autonomy or sources of stable funding. This will continue to hamper our ability to plan much beyond one fiscal year.

Increasing costs, particularly in the criminal justice system, added state mandates without any increase in revenues, growing social problems, and the costs of maintaining a basic infrastructure, makes county government vulnerable.

Citizens need to be made aware of this dilemma and the County must also make the state and federal governments aware of the results of the continuing policy of paying for tax reductions and other programs at the expense of local government. All local officials need to be conscious of the costs of the services we are obliged to provide.

Most of the discretionary monies available to the county are being spent on the criminal justice system. At the current rate, it is unlikely we will be able to adequately finance this system beyond this decade.

Judges, prosecutors, public defenders, law enforcement officials and others must join with this board in seeking to implement effective changes and modifications, to limit the costs of the justice system while continuing to adhere to the tenets of fairness, equal treatment and justice under the law.

The county's workfare program was given a new lease on life last year when the Legislature extended our pilot program tying some welfare benefits to public service work. Also, after three years, our effort to obtain reimbursement for Food Stamp Workfare administrative costs was successful, but only after proving that for only \$438,000 in administrative costs the County of San Diego was able to save the federal government \$2 million annually.

A Chief Administrative Officer's taskforce of the County's City Managers is taking a look at a significant funding problem -- Revenue Sharing. Obviously the County cannot provide all the social services that it is being asked to, or should, provide. Cities must begin to take part of the burden, especially for social services provided as a result of their decisions. We can no longer simplify things by saying, "The county is responsible for social services." We must each be responsible for helping solve our problems.

I am confident that this year we will also develop an equitable and open process for determining the allocation of Transient Occupancy Tax funds which reflects both the source of the monies from the unincorporated areas and the benefits of regional institutions, wherever they may be located.

One of the major roles of the County is to provide municipal services to the 400,000 residents of the unincorporated areas, especially the more urbanized areas. We are their local government, making decisions for them that city councils make in cities. And while these citizens did not vote for most of their "council", I, as I am sure the other supervisors, take seriously our obligation to listen to their concerns and to be responsive to them. Toward that end, the role of community planning groups needs to be redefined and bolstered. The Department of Planning and Land Use has forwarded several recommendations on this subject to us and we will be dealing with them soon. Some of you may recall the marathon sessions of the Board toward the end of last year to process General Plan Amendments. The process was cumbersome, lengthy and worse of all, denied the citizens involved in these proposed changes a fair hearing while consuming many hours waiting for a particular item. In 1985, General Plan Amendment hearings will be allotted more time and will be scheduled at times to insure that each issue is given full and fair consideration.

Other issues though are not as easily solved. Drug abuse is tearing apart the social fabric of our community. The continuing tragic PCP deaths underscore the need to move swiftly and urgently against this growing menace. The use of cocaine has become endemic, gaining dangerous respectability, when it continues to kill and ruin lives and families.

Substance abuse of legal and illegal drugs is closely related to juvenile delinquency. Eighty to 90 per cent of youth in county detention facilities were either under the influence of drugs when they committed the crime or committed the offense to get money for drugs. In a land of so much opportunity, too many young people have given up on their lives. This malaise, fostered by drugs, the inattention of frightened and sometimes abusive or absent parents and peer pressure, leads to frustration and hopelessness. And when a young person loses a sense of his or her own value, he or she may place very little value on the lives and property of others, making robbery, assault and murder a way of life.

This failure to imagine life beyond despair locks too many into a treadmill of failure. Where death by violent means -- knifing, shooting and drug overdoses -- is almost considered death by natural causes. The failure of their lives robs all of us of their potential.

We need to put more emphasis on eliminating the causes of delinquency -- drug abuse, child abuse and learning disabilities -- to avoid the escalating costs of the criminal justice system which must arrest, convict and incarcerate youthful offenders, who grow up to be adult offenders.

Children are being victimized in other ways. The inadequate provision of child care makes it impossible for many parents to find life supporting jobs or creates "latch key" children who are left to fend for themselves. In April, I will be sponsoring a hearing on the state of child care in San Diego County to determine how we can combine resources to provide these needed services.

In the past year we have, regrettably, seen as a result of state legislation, a widening disparity between the services provided for child abuse and those for senior adult abuse. Adult abuse is perhaps one of the major societal issues which has yet to emerge into our consciousness. Yet the victims increase as public resources decrease. This year a Board declared Adult Abuse Awareness Week will be a step toward focusing public attention on the causes and solutions to this problem.

We must also be aware of the growing environmental and public health problems that plague not only San Diego, but other urban centers as well. Last year, the County was successful in sponsoring a pilot program on residential toxic waste removal that serves as a national model.

While we approached major public health issues such as the trauma center designation and the relocation of medical services into the health services complex, during 1984, AIDS cases continued to climb in San Diego County and for the first time it appears that this deadly disease has now crossed over from the high risk groups and threatens the general community.

For San Diego the problem of the homeless takes on new urgency as downtown -- the regional center for finance, the arts and government -- becomes redeveloped. The homeless, displaced twice over, have become more visible, not just downtown but in surrounding communities. This is a regional problem with social and economic impacts, and must be faced by the county in partnership with the city and state.

Human relations -- unlike the turmoil that first spawned concern in the 1960s -- is no longer simply a black and white matter. As San Diego continues to become a major urban center it is attracting various population groups with different ways of life and culture. Our failure to understand and live peacefully with these differences, has led to repeated acts of violence, including burnings, housing discrimination, marches, firebombings, neglect and murder.

There is a need for the creation of a human relations commission. San Diego stands alone as the only major urban area in California without one. I will be bringing to the Board's first policy conference in February a proposal to create a human relations commission for San Diego County -- not as a cure-all for our social ills, but as a visible working commission that will foster understanding among the many diverse populations which are rapidly making San Diego a community of different groups.

As a final note, I would like to add some personal thoughts. I have lived in San Diego, since high school graduation in Bakersfield. And, I have never thought of living anywhere else. Yet in my early adult life there were many serious impediments especially for a minority person -- even a college degree did little to remove the barriers.

There were no people of color anywhere in positions of authority or influence. My being here today, as chairman of the County Board of Supervisors, the first black person to give a State of the County address is, I think, a tribute to how far all of us have come together and how much we can accomplish in the future. It is made even more poignant and meaningful to me because it comes also on the anniversary of the birth of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. -- a man whose tragically shortened life was dedicated to the betterment of all people in this great country.

If I have learned anything in my lifetime, including 16 years in public office, it is that those accomplishments which endure are those which are created through team work and cooperation.

I am both grateful and honored by this opportunity to promote that team work necessary to move us ahead, to meet public expectations and to make San Diego County the best place to live for everyone.

Thank You.

