



SUPERVISOR WILLIAMS REPORTS.....

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Permit No. 571
San Diego, CA 92101

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January 1984



Dear Friend:

My first full year as the Fourth District Supervisor has been one of excitement, challenges and a growing concern over our future ability to provide the necessary services and programs with our dwindling revenue base.

The passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 not only reduced property taxes, but took away much of the decision making from local government. Since counties can no longer raise revenues through property taxes, the Legislature now controls the amount of money we receive. This makes our funding uncertain and subject to Sacramento's political wrangling each year.

While San Diego County's \$800 million budget is large, 93 percent is basically money passed through to the county to run federal or state mandated programs. Of the remaining seven percent, much goes to pay for the criminal justice system and other programs for which we are obligated to provide but for which we do not receive sufficient revenues to operate.

We need to develop a reliable source of funding for local governments that is not subject to the whim of legislators 500 miles away. The Governor's proposed budget recognizes this problem by recommending a constitutional guarantee of revenue beyond the legislative control, from motor vehicle license and cigarette taxes. As vice chairman of the Governmental Finance and Operations Committee of the County Supervisors Association of California, I hope to be very active this next year in persuading the Legislature to enact lasting reforms.

San Diego is on the brink of a great era. Certainly, the physical nature of San Diego will change dramatically. We have to see that this results in a positive lifestyle for those of us who live here. The approval of the convention center will spawn new development, particularly in hotels and new downtown businesses will bring many new jobs to the area. This also gives us the opportunity to initiate affirmative action programs to make sure that those who are hardest hit by unemployment will have a chance for a permanent job in San Diego's expanding economy.

With steel rising to form the Horton Plaza shopping center, the signs of renewal also force us to look at the other residents of downtown, those without homes and too often without hope. My office is participating in the Mayor's Task Force on the Homeless and with other county funded agencies to address this problem.

OUR NEIGHBORHOODS

Attention must also be given to our older neighborhoods where revitalization is important. As co-chairman of the Reinvestment Task Force, I have been urging that we find ways to make feasible city and county employee pension funds to invest in projects which would improve these established neighborhoods while protecting those funds. This year the task force will benefit from having a full-time staff person. I am pleased with the reception so far to these suggestions and of the work of the members of the task force.

We must begin to stop the inappropriate mixtures of land use which contribute to the decline of older neighborhoods. This will require a community commitment and the coordination of local agencies. In the next year, I hope to see the beginnings of a renewed interest by the private and public sector in making our older neighborhoods places in which investment is welcomed and rewarded.

Another example of putting County resources to work to create neighborhood revitalization is Heritage Park. Established in 1973, the park has had a history of business failures and poor management. This year, at my urging, we began to set Heritage Park back on the right course.

The Board approved a marketing and economic analysis after which the Board directed staff to begin the process which could result in a master developer for Heritage Park, to expand the number of historic buildings, increase parking and ensure that it is an interesting place for families to visit and enjoy. The success of Heritage Park will have a ripple effect on all of Old Town. Additionally, I support efforts to review Old Town's current community plan which is out of date.

There has also been much activity in other communities within the Fourth Supervisorial District. I was pleased to support efforts to create a Business Improvement District in Hillcrest, join with Mid-City residents in expressing concern over the 40th Street extension and secured additional funds for the Normal Heights Community Development Corporation.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Last year I testified before the Senate Select Committee on Southern California Transportation Problems in favor of the east line extension of the San Diego Trolley. The trolley will create 2,500 jobs along the corridor, many of them within the Fourth Supervisorial District. Of the \$112 million to build the extension, \$45 million will be spent on the six stations within the Fourth District. In preparation for the extension, the Board has also approved the allocation of transportation development funds to construct a major transfer station at Imperial Avenue in the Fourth Supervisorial District.

Next year will also see the construction of a new transit center at San Diego State University which will increase the ease for bus transfers, eliminate much of the traffic congestion and make the university even more transit accessible than before.

CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT

I have long believed that government works best in the open. Toward that end, I have made many suggestions to make county government more accessible and the process more open to the public. The first was to author the policy of conducting an open selection process for a new county supervisor to replace Roger Hedgecock. In the past, the selection had taken place in private session.

At my urging, the Board conducted its first meeting in the community. Held in Encinitas, the night session of the Board allowed North County residents to express their feelings about county services to unincorporated areas. The reaction to this meeting was positive and I hope the Board will continue the practice this year.

I was not successful, however, in getting Board approval to make the appointment of successors to all elected officials in the public. I thought this was particularly important in light of the criticism the Board received over the appointment process used to select the new county assessor. My proposal would have required the Board to seek the most qualified individual for these vacant posts.

Public confidence in government was seriously shaken when the Coroner's cause of death of a young man detained by police was proven wrong by a second autopsy paid for by a community organization. While I believe this unusual case to be a glaring exception to the fine record of this department, I asked the County Grand Jury to investigate the procedures which allowed this kind of mistake to occur.

Earlier, when Barry Preston was killed as a result of a mis-applied choke hold by police officers, the Coroner supported my efforts to have the Board endorse state legislation which would establish standards for the use of the controversial hold.

Just after I assumed office I was pleased to hold a reception for county employees which I will repeat this year. During the last year I have been greatly impressed with the quality and concern of our public employees.

There is much talk about a lack of leadership in county government. With 11,000 employees, San Diego County is one of the region's major employers which has a significant impact upon the area's economy and future. Yet we are adrift. County government structure does not provide for the "buck" to stop anywhere, including the Board of Supervisors. Part of this is attributable to the lack of a solid reliable financial base which I mentioned earlier.

But some of the responsibility rests with the Board itself. I have tried to be a calming influence on a Board that had been known for its rancor and disagreement. Above all, it has been my intent to treat each person with respect and to value their intelligence and desire to serve the county.

Leadership must first come from the Board of Supervisors, the elected officials to whom citizens look for accountability. During this next year, one of my goals will be to stimulate an interest in changing the structure of county government so that it can be more responsive and efficient.

PLANNING FOR GROWTH

The County is responsible for land use and planning in all the unincorporated areas. To keep up with the rapid changes fostered by growth it needs to improve its record keeping and permit processing abilities. I will soon be asking the Board to approve automation of the planning department which will give instant information on the status of every permit filed with the County and with vital information on each property parcel, such as assessed valuation, taxes, fire district boundaries, zoning and political jurisdictions.

San Diego continues to be one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. Unless we make plans to accomodate that growth in an orderly fashion, we will become victims of our popularity. Over the years, the County's planning efforts have been reduced to the point where no serious advance planning is now being done. This needs to change if we are to adequately meet the pressures of growth and to provide the services which this growth demands.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

No doubt you have read about the County's continuing problems with minority hiring. The County has been under court order, called a consent decree, to increase the number of minorities and women employees. One of the County's major problems with recruiting and keeping qualified, competent people has been the failure, I believe, to create a career path for them within the county. We need to establish a training and development program for middle management talent from which people can be promoted. Too often, we have to go outside the County to find capable top managers and to meet the demands of the consent decree.

The recent study by the State lists over 60 recommendations regarding the county's personnel policies which should help us move to a position where such consent decrees are no longer necessary.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Another court order the Board is under is to reduce the number of inmates in overcrowded county jails. This has been a lingering problem that has eluded solution. This is a critical issue that must be faced by the Board and the whole justice system this year. We must look not only to increasing the capacity of detention facilities but finding responsible alternatives to incarceration.

During the last year, I have had the opportunity to meet with many judges and attorneys to try to come to grips with the spiraling costs of our judicial system. I hope this next year to be helpful in promoting innovative and cost-effective approaches to solving some of our more pressing criminal justice issues such as indigent defense, the overcrowding of jails and too many cases for the number of courts we have .

I am also particularly concerned with the future of our youth. Too many have lost hope and have little confidence in themselves and in what our society opens to them. Juvenile delinquency is increasing and the number of serious, violent crimes committed by youth is a danger signal that something is not right in our society. We must find ways to bring back and keep our young people productive members of society. I plan to make this issue a major concern of mine in 1984.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Public health, one of the major responsibilities of the County, is becoming a victim of revenue reductions. When it

was revealed that a \$7 fee for venereal disease testing and treatment had resulted in 1700 people failing to get treatment, I was able to get the Board to waive the fee for anyone who cannot pay.

Toxic waste has become a serious environmental problem of this decade and I was pleased to be able to sponsor a hazardous material pilot program for small generators of toxic waste, such as homeowners and small businesses.

The terrible tragedy of AIDS -- acquired immunity disease syndrome -- has hit San Diego. There are over 30 cases reported in this County. I fully support the involvement of our public health professionals in doing whatever can be done to eradicate this disease. Right now, ignorance is one of the major obstacles to containing this outbreak, and county public health is doing all it can to provide education to those affected by the disease. Additionally, the county is participating in the Mayor's Task Force on AIDS.

I also serve on the Health Systems Agency Board of San Diego and Imperial Counties. This gives me an overview of the many health and health related problems in the County from a planning perspective. For example, the Health Systems Agency reviews all requests from hospitals for additional beds to ensure enough beds are available to meet San Diego's health care needs. One issue to be discussed this year will be the designation of area hospitals as trauma medical centers. This designation will require a higher level of service for those hospitals selected. The process promises to be controversial and complex.

The alarming increase in the use of PCP has reached near epidemic proportions in San Diego. As a first step, the county has earmarked \$17,000 for a pilot project toward dealing with this problem. I continue to meet with community organizations and concerned parents over this issue and will propose increased attention to the problem this year.

MAKING GOVERNMENT WORK

One of the contributing factors to making government work is the network of volunteers who serve on county boards and commissions, to advise the county on critical policy-making issues. As supervisor, I make many appointments to boards and I am always pleased to learn of someone's particular interest in serving. If you have an interest, please let me know, and I will make sure your name is considered when vacancies occur on those boards.

I have also formed different advisory groups to assist

me in developing policy on county issues. The Fourth District Advisory Council will be holding its first meeting of 1984 in February and a special issues task force has been meeting regularly to advise me on how to find solutions to some of our criminal justice problems.

1984 will also bring new responsibilities as I serve as vice chairman, prior to assuming the chairmanship of the Board in 1985. In addition to my Board duties I am also on the national board of the National Association of Counties, and on the County's Mental health Advisory Board.

As always, I value your thoughts and comments and hope that you will feel free to share them with me whenever you can.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Leon L. Williams".

LEON L. WILLIAMS
Supervisor
Fourth District

