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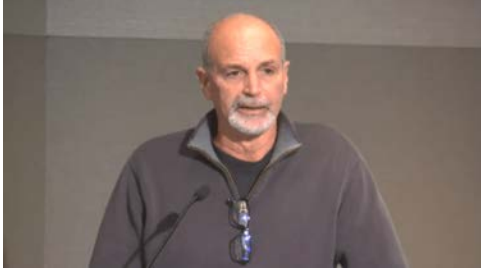
News Headlines 02/10/2021

- COUNTY SUPERVISORS CALLED ON THE CARPET BY GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG GROUP

COUNTY SUPERVISORS CALLED ON THE CARPET BY GOVERNMENT WATCHDOG GROUP

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Tom Murphy of the Red Brennan Group addressed the County Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

In recent years the good-government, watchdog organization known as the Red Brennan Group has made a name for itself by calling attention to government waste and excess. The group often finds itself at odds with the county board of supervisors as demonstrated at yesterday's supervisor meeting in San Bernardino. This latest conflict impacts your wallet; reporter Mike Lipsitz tells us what it's all about...

During yesterday's public comment period, three speakers from the Red Brennan Group—Thomas Murphy, Natalie Zuk, and Chad Keel—addressed the lawsuit the board of supervisors has filed against Measure K. The first to speak was Thomas Murphy, who stated the group's points of contention.

“Acting on behalf of the 516,814 citizens who voted in favor of the measure, the Red Brennan Group will call on the Board of Supervisors to fulfill the will of voters by dropping their lawsuit and implementing Measure K. The group's four main issues of concern are the county's frivolous lawsuit against Measure K, the unconstitutional FP-5 special fire tax, which is a direct violation of Proposition 218, Measure J, which was a competing measure meant to mislead voters, and a call for the board to address the county's ever-increasing pension burden.”

Measure K, passed by a two-thirds supermajority of voters last November, caps elected supervisor annual compensation at \$60,000 to reflect the median household income of county residents, and allows one, four-year term to county supervisors. The lawsuit, initiated by the Board of Supervisors and funded by taxpayers, attempts to halt implementation of Measure K.

Acting on behalf of the 516,814 citizens who voted in favor of the measure, the Red Brennan Group called on the board of supervisors to fulfill the will of voters by dropping its lawsuit and implementing Measure K. The group's four main issues of concern are the county's frivolous lawsuit against Measure K; the unconstitutional FP-5 special fire fee, which is a direct violation of Proposition 218; Measure J, which the Red Brennan Groups says was a competing measure meant to mislead voters; and a call for the board to address the county's ever-increasing pension burden.

Tom Murphy of the Red Brennan Group addressed the County Board of Supervisors Tuesday.

Thomas Murphy:

My colleagues and I, Chad and Natalie, want to address four concerns, the board's response to Measure K, Measure J, the FP5 special tax, and threat posed by the county's pension debt? As an organization dedicated to big-hearted communities and small government, the Red Brennan Group has been concerned about the expanding size, scope and performance of San Bernardino County government. In November of 2017, our organization sponsored the Leadership Accountability Initiative. The intent of this initiative was to assure

elected leadership adhere to the county charter and begin the exercise fiscal discipline with respect to overall budget and headcount. A reward for exercising our rights was to be dragged into court by the board. As a strategy, the Leadership Accountability Initiative was broken down in component parts and resubmitted in a variety of iterations. Again, the county sued on ten different submissions, just two required – ballot title and summary. The two initiatives the board allowed covered two topics, supervisor compensation and term limits.

Fast-forward to November 2020, on the strength of 70,000 signatures, Measure K was presented to county voters and approved by a super majority of those voters. What were the components of Measure K? Term limits and supervisor compensation. Measure K, with its limit of one term and cap on compensation, was the only option for reform that this board did not sue us over.

How did the board respond to the success of Measure K? Rather than acknowledge the super majority vote and take a leadership role to implement K, this board again choose to go to the law. Effectively using taxpayer resources against them. This is both bad leadership and bad politics. From the perspective of the voters this board is simply rubber-stamping the direction given to them by county bureaucrats. And I'm going to cease my comments there.

Chad Keel railed against the County Board of Supervisors about the FP-5 fire fee.
Chad Keel:

Thank you, chair. Thank you, supervisors. Thank you, non-elected former librarian; what a promotion.

On the strength of just five politician's signatures Measure J was placed on the last November's ballot to compete with Measure K. It lost by a huge margin, and none of this measure is valid and your attorneys know this. Continuing to pay yourself in accordance with the measures amounts to theft in funds belonging to the citizens of this county. The California Constitution also states, "No local government may impose, extend, or increase any special tax unless and until that tax is submitted to the electorate and approved by a two-thirds vote."

Given this language, why are nearly one-half of county residents paying a special tax they never approved by a two-thirds vote?

Everyone in this room knows the tax was imposed in violation of article 13C of the constitution. How is this acceptable? How can you sit there, and be called county supervisors, while you allow our California Constitution to be disregarded, and the people you represent to be exploited?

Do the right thing. This tax was imposed by, and can be done away by, your board. How can you convene in secret session and unanimously vote to give \$65 million in legal settlements to your campaign contributors? The optics are awful and especially when there was knowledge you would have to vote on this matter when accepting campaign funds. Elected supervisors ought to be recuse themselves in any situation where an appearance of special interest exists. Recuse yourself; that's a standard being a county board of supervisor. We invite you to assess your goals moving forward. Stopping the county's continued abuse of the legal system to block the express will of the county voters — talking about Measure K there — stopping the unconstrained and overexpanding growth in the size of compensation of the county bureaucracy and stop the impending failure of the county's pension fund, and the use of billions from this fund, to fund other countries to compete with ours.

Thank you very much.

Natalie Zuk of Twentynine Palms, urged the County Board of Supervisors to lead on Measure K, lead on Measure J, and lead on the FP5 tax repeal.

Natalie Zuk:

Good afternoon, chairman and honorable members of the board. My name is Natalie Zuk. I am a life-long resident of San Bernardino County and I am employed by the Red Brennan Group, and I am here on behalf of the 516,000 San Bernardino County voters who voted in favor of Measure K and would like to see it through. The Red Brennan Group will work with anyone for the benefit of this county in good faith. But you can expect an absence of good faith and cooperation from yourselves. We invite you to vigorously defend Measure K on behalf of the 66 percent of county voters that approved this measure... a tax that we shouldn't have to do, yet unfortunately we're here to speak about today. In accordance with California election code Measure K won therefore Measure J should have no effect. And we will aggressively defend this position in court. The repeal of the FP5 special tax will once again be placed and submitted to voters on the March 2022 ballot as well, and finally, the Red Brennan Group will support any candidate, and we have been approached by many candidates so far, and I'm actually pretty excited about it, for the 2022 county supervisors' election, that is going to serve in accordance with the terms set forth under Measure K. And to foreswear contributions from special interests in an effort to build trust in the political system within the county shown by actions, rather than words. We seek to deliver the best government to the county citizens for no more than the true cost of providing that product with the leftover balance being used creatively to benefit this county's citizens, rather than its governing elite. Lead on Measure K, lead on Measure J, lead on the FP5 tax repeal, and finally, exercise leadership on the county pension fund, and stop hiring your friends who have no CEO background whatsoever to serve as the CEOs of very important positions within our county. Thank you.

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