



State Assemblyman

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MAJOR ISSUES FACE THE 1976 CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

LEGISLATORS WORK CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH GOVERNOR BROWN because Assembly Speaker Leo McCarthy and Senator James Mill, President Pro Tempore of the State Senate, maintain a close working relationship with Jerry Brown. Fighting in the news media between partners in the legislative process has never been productive. Governor Reagan never seemed to learn the fact that he should have been on friendlier basis with the legislators if his programs were to gain acceptance. As a member of the two most powerful committees of the Assembly (Rules and Ways and Means), I have developed high regard for Governor Brown in dealings with his staff and in personal contacts with him on legislative matters.

INFLATION WITH HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT has created an unusual political and economic environment which demands all of us to carefully consider our priorities and goals in light of rapidly changing circumstances. Deficit financing by our National Government combined with the energy crisis at a time when New York and other cities and states are in financial difficulties calls for wisdom, restraint and economies at all levels of government. I have no fear of the outcome providing an enlightened public cares enough to express itself at the ballot box. Your representatives, be they U.S. Senators, Congressmen, State Senators, State Assemblymen, County Supervisors or City Councilmen, need your constructive suggestions, criticism and prayers. A disinterested electorate will encourage uneconomic excesses pushed by special interest groups with "tunnel vision". This report may seem pessimistic, but I intend to present the realism of our problems so that you can constructively help me and your other elected representatives to find logical solutions.

MAJOR ISSUES FACING THE 1976 SESSION OF THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF FOR LOW INCOME FAMILIES AND SENIOR CITIZENS is high on my priority list for early action. Taxes are driving people from homes due to the impact of inflation on home valuations. Current law requires the County Assessor to maintain reasonably current appraisals on the assessment rolls. Legislation to deal with this problem is in the mill and I will be pushing hard for passage. As the details unfold, I will communicate this in my next report to you.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS is another very high priority item on my list for 1976. As a member of the Joint Legislative Budget Committee and the Ways and Means Committee, I will be playing a significant part in working with Governor Brown on the 1976-77 State Budget. You will hear more from me on this issue as the budget hearings progress. The Governor will have my backing in his efforts to cut bureaucratic fat from all state departments.

MEDICAL MALPRACTICE INSURANCE, one of the most complex issues, has no easy solutions. A crisis in health services delivery may force the Insurance Underwriters, Doctors, Lawyers, Hospitals and the public through their legislators into some painful decisions. AB 1xx adopted late in the 1975 session provided significant reforms, but it will take a year or two for the impact on insurance premiums to be visible. Many physicians in Ventura County will limit their services to emergency and routine procedures pending a solution to this impasse. Annual insurance premiums running as high as \$40,000 have been reported to my office. It is obvious the patient cannot afford this additional load added to the high cost of medical care. I suspect that the entire health delivery system in California will go through a searching review as well as the legal-judicial system as it relates to liability and tort law.

COASTAL CONSERVATION PLAN has been submitted to the Legislature in accordance with the requirements of Proposition 20 adopted by the voters a few years ago. The plan is designed to protect the California coast as a great natural resource for the benefit of the present and future generations. It proposes to meet human needs in a manner that protects the irreplaceable resources of coastal lands and waters. When I have the benefit of the views of our County Board of Supervisors, the Councils of the cities in our county, and other groups and individuals, I will determine my position on the Plan. In general, I am inclined to support a plan which fully recognizes local government authority to zone land use within reasonable guidelines established by the Legislature. I have confidence that there is the will and capability within Ventura County to meet this important challenge and I will look with disfavor upon any state plan which sets up another bureaucracy to add unnecessary and costly regulation. Your views on this matter will be appreciated.

GASOLINE TAX INCREASE TO FINANCE ROAD CONSTRUCTION is provided in SB 100 presently before the Ways and Means Committee of which I am a member. Governor Brown has expressed doubt concerning the wisdom of taking "high velocity" money from the pockets of the hard-pressed average consumer and converting that into contracts for labor and materials in road construction. I have not made up my mind on this issue and I would appreciate your reaction. In general, I feel inclined to support a 2c increase per gallon **IF** I could be assured that some of the serious highway problems of Ventura County would be resolved. Unfortunately, I have received no assurance from CALTRANS or the Highway Commission and until I do, I am a No vote on the tax increase. As Chairman of the budget review subcommittee on Resources and Energy, I will play a key role in this entire matter.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYEES continues to be a major issue before the Legislature because of the political clout and campaign funding potential of unions and public employee organizations. With the passage of SB 160 late in the 1975 session, school teachers and classified employees have been provided a mechanism to obtain mandatory dues to finance collective bargaining efforts. Under the measure a majority of the employees in school districts in each group (teachers and classified employees) can designate a bargaining agent and finance their efforts through the payroll dues checkoff. I oppose this bill because it did nothing to solve the serious financial problems facing the school districts. All the bargaining and dues paying in the world will not "create" money for the economic gains envisioned by those who support SB160. If there are inequities in pay and benefits, it is not because of the lack of collective bargainingit is because the districts have run out of money and programs have been cut to the minimum. The real question to solve is the financing of education in California which is made more difficult by the passage of SB 160. Whether we pass additional legislation for other public employees (state and local government) is highly speculative at the moment considering the economic limitations and general public reaction to the problems of New York City, San Francisco, and others. There is no question that the inflation pressure hits all workers and the ability to raise tax revenue beyond present rates is unrealistic to say the least. Our efforts should be directed toward seeking efficiencies and economies in government operations.

UNICAMERAL (ONE-HOUSE) LEGISLATURE has had my active support for many years. A constitutional amendment initiative drive aimed at the November, 1976, ballot should receive your support. It will take 499,846 signatures to qualify this initiative for the ballot.

There are a number of advantages to a one-house legislature, but perhaps the most important is that it would allow all legislators to have smaller election districts. Currently Senators represent about 500,000 people each and Assemblymen represent 250,000. In the proposed unicameral legislature, each legislator would represent about 200,000. Smaller districts would permit legislators to have much more personal contact with constituents, especially during election campaigns. Campaign money, with its corrupting influence, would be much less important in elections, since candidates would not need to make such heavy use of media and public relations firms to get their basic message to the voters. In short, a unicameral legislature would help bring politics back to the people.

A unicameral legislature would also be much less expensive, better coordinated, less hurried, and generally more effective than a two-house legislature. Since it would be far simpler, the legislative process would be more comprehensible to the public, and would also be more accessible to public participation. Write to me if you want more information on this issue.

We are seeking volunteers to obtain signatures on One-House Legislature petitions. If you are interested, please contact my district office at 3212 Loma Vista Road, Suite 130, Ventura, phone 648-5328.

A NEW JOB FOR ME IN 1977 will result from my announcement that I will not seek a sixth term in the California Assembly. The future of my public service will be closer to home.....hopefully. Needless to say, the confidence and support I have received from the voters of Ventura County is deeply appreciated. I will continue to actively serve as your State Assemblyman until December 1976 when my successor will take the oath of office. Best wishes for a productive NEW YEAR!

Ken Mac Donald
