

Props for Provenza, budget reform efforts

By Bob Dunning

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Enterprise columnist

VULNERABLE NEED NOT APPLY ... as the county — along with the state, the city, the school board and everyone else — tackles a budget problem with seemingly no solution, the least among us are certain to get left in the dust ... which is why today's standing ovation goes to Supervisor Jim Provenza for standing up for people who are not likely to pay him back at the ballot box ... last time I checked, undocumented residents can't vote, but that didn't stop Provenza from saying "no" to the proposed elimination of medical services for the undocumented ... not that it mattered ... the measure carried by a 3-2 vote and we can only shed a tear for what the future holds for this often-despised group of God's children ...

MAKING HIS CASE ... what was particularly striking about Provenza's principled but unpopular position was that it was both practical and compassionate ... "I think this is a mistake," Provenza said of the cut in services ... "I could no more vote for this than I could deny care to Asians, blacks or Italians." ... (see "God's children" above) ... Provenza went on to note that the denial of medical care will simply send a vulnerable population underground, creating a public health nightmare because they are afraid or unable to seek treatment ... it is a sad day for our county and for all of us who are so blessed to live here ...

WATER WOES ... thank heavens we have folks like Ed Schroeder and George Tchobanoglous — the Water Whiz Kids — living in this town and willing and able to take our city councilmembers by the hand and walk them through the various options available to solve our worrisome water situation ... turns out we might be able to do with a Ford instead of that Cadillac the council was looking at ...

SPEAKING OF WATER ... Glen the Sewer Guy, ever vigilante when the subject of water comes up in polite conversation, wants to know if UC Davis' new chancellor will "need a helping hand paying for the city's water and sewer services at her new digs on College Park." ... as Glen so accurately describes it, this is "certainly no inconsequential outlay unless, of course, the University of California picks up that tab, too." ... Glen, my friend, we all know the new chancellor has been awarded an attractive package, but there are limits even to what UC can do ... if the Regents had agreed to pay her city water and sewer bill along with everything else, it would have more than doubled her compensation ...

WORD FROM THE NORTH ... Tim on Losoya (not to be confused with Loyola) in Greater Woodland writes to tell me "I visited Phoenix, Arizona three weeks ago." ... thanks, Tim, but it's way too early for "How I Spent My Summer Vacation." ... "I was intrigued that the Arizona legislature is a part-time legislature." ... which means their budget deficit is probably only half of what ours is ... "Arizona legislators receive \$24,000 a year." ... but, considering the difference in the cost of living, that'll still buy a lot of cactus fruit and jalapeño jam ... "Given the poor performance of the California legislature, I propose that Californians explore legislative reform and total overhaul of the legislative branch." ... I'll sign that petition ... "A legislative branch that decides nothing and puts all the decisions onto the voters is clearly overpaid and useless to Californians." ... amen to that ... "Another improvement

would be to do away with term limits." ... I'll sign that petition, too ... "At the time, it sounded good — no career politicians — but it clearly hasn't worked." ... the worst thing about term limits, Tim, is that the only thing it limits is our choice as voters ... if someone is doing a stellar job — Lois Wolk and Helen Thomson come to mind — I want the right to vote for them no matter how long they've been in office ... and if someone's doing a lousy job, I can always vote him out of office when his term expires, or even sooner through the recall process ... put simply, there is no reason for term limits ... before term limits were instituted, we already had the power to control their terms in office just by voting them in or out ... adds Tim: "I'm not sure of your politics, but during the tenure of speaker Willie Brown Jr., things got done." ... agreed ... and by the way, I'm not sure of my politics either ...

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