



El Dorado County

James R. "Jack" Sweeney
Supervisor, District III

Date: February 13, 2011

To: Board of Supervisors, CAO, Board Clerk

RE: BUDGET or POLICY??
Item #21- Strategic Direction - 2/15/11 Agenda

Should this Nation, State, or Local Government predict its services on availability of revenues or should the services rendered by such governments be based on the desires and needs of the citizens?

The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of these United States is as follows:
"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." My reading of this amendment and of the Constitution generally is that the people wanted to place limits on what the government could take from it in the way of taxes (and fees) and return to the people in the way of services that which some elected officials might deem as being within their power and authority.

"We the people" have been confused by elected individuals and bureaucrats that want us to believe that we need certain services and should be willing to pay for such services. And to make this position worse, we have created a society that believes it must "get its share" and that the government owes the people their very sustenance. Government should not be run by a vocal minority that wants certain services, but by the somewhat silent majority that demands and desires very little.

We have arrived at a time when we need to realize that government cannot do all things for all people. John F. Kennedy, in his inauguration speech said "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country." I believe he was trying to get people to be less demanding of government handouts and recognized that this great nation could not continue its giveaway programs.

It is well past time for the people that run all forms of government in this nation to be certain that the programs they choose to provide are the programs desired by and needed by the people they serve. People chosen to serve the public should not just be looking to continue long provided services by raising revenues to continue such services; they **MUST** confirm the need, desire, and acceptability of such services by the people.

The budget balancing process IS NOT the way to serve the people! First, programs must be understood and examined to determine their benefits to and acceptance by the people of this land. Next, the people need to indicate the value of such programs and what they are willing to pay for the services. Following this process will determine the size of government and the size of its budget. Just raising taxes or reducing budgets is not the way to serve the public.

I believe this county can best begin to get its governance back on track by obtaining a strong understanding of every program assigned to each department. In order to accomplish this effort, I propose that we direct the Cao to work with all departments to provide a comprehensive list and explanation of every program within the department responsibility. Such list should be limited to a simple one line description in a format such as might be displayed on an Excel Spreadsheet. The contents would contain at least the following:

- 1) Department, 2) program, 3) Code and/or policy reference, 4) ten words (or less) description of program, 6) reference to location of enhanced information on program, 7) expected results (numbers of widgets), 8) actual results, 9) amount of Federal, State, County, or other funds provided annually, 10) previous years actual cost, 11) suggested better alternative 12) number of employees assigned to program.

Many times we have heard that governments should be run like businesses; government is now the biggest business in the United States and all seem to be failing in the eyes of their customers! So, let us do as we would in a business and analyze what our customers want and what they are willing to pay for and how they will pay. Once this is done we can get on with budgeting.

Comments and critiques of this document are requested and will be welcomed. I am looking for better ways to serve my constituents!

Thank you for your interest, Jack Sweeney

CC: Department Heads