

# **COUNTY OF FRESNO**

## **FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM**

**2007-2008** (Updated 1-15-08)

### **INTRODUCTION**

This Legislative Platform is a statement of the goals and priorities of the Fresno County Board of Supervisors and establishes the basis of its advocacy efforts with Congress and Federal agencies.

The Platform contains broad goals and specific legislative proposals directed toward measures of specific interest and benefit to the County of Fresno in the areas of finance, human services, libraries, economic development, agriculture and resources, transportation, law enforcement and public safety.

### **MAJOR LEGISLATIVE ISSUES**

- Support restrictions on new unfunded Federal mandates and the authority of local government to reduce mandated programs and services when domestic spending reductions are adopted by Congress.
- Support increased local control of Federal programs and flexibility in the utilization of categorical funding.
- Preserve Medicare, Medicaid and Disproportionate Share Provider Payment Adjustment funding until such time as comprehensive alternative public health systems are operational.
- Ensure a seamless Statewide welfare system for all legal residents that hold counties financially harmless for any cost increases.
- Support legislation that would consider the financial impact of health and welfare legislation upon counties, such as Fresno, with high refugee populations and include appropriate mitigating provisions.
- Support a Federal-Local Government Partnership in order to achieve long-term economic recovery, and encourage coordinated local and regional economic development efforts, including enhanced tourism activities and attractions.
- Support Federal programs to fund water supply-related projects and construction of new water storage and recharge projects giving priority to areas experiencing long-term groundwater overdraft.

- Support legislation that provides funding for pest prevention and high-risk exclusion programs that provide homeland security and protect our agricultural industry, residential and community landscapes, and our natural resources including the timber industry, from damage by pests not native to California or Fresno County.
- Support the annual legislative appropriation of obligational authority at 100% of levels authorized in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible & Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005 – a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).
- Support timely reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU with funding primarily directed to established and proven infrastructure programs such as the Surface Transportation, Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality, Highway Bridge, and Rural Road Safety programs that provide the greatest public benefit based on technical evaluations of performance, safety, air quality, and needs criteria.
- Support legislation that recognizes the inter-dependence of departments within the justice system and takes all activities into account when allocating justice funding (investigation and apprehension of criminals, prosecution, indigent defense, probation services, coroner, and incarceration).
- Support adequate funding for mandated programs to meet the needs of Fresno County.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

- I. Support increased homeland security funding to protect against agro-terrorism; promote food safety, environmental health and public safety communications. Support increased funding designated for training.
- II. Seek funding for County gang prevention, intervention and suppression programs.
- III. Seek funding for data interoperability for multiple public safety agencies, i.e., fire, Emergency Medical Systems, transportation safety and Homeland Security for multiple jurisdictions.
- IV. Support appropriation for improvements to State Route 180.
- V. Advocate for increased federal funding directed at Methamphetamine enforcement and clean-up.
- VI. Support legislation that offsets County costs associated with the Federal Communications Commission ruling requiring a change in the way the current communications spectrum is utilized.
- VII. Support efforts to address flooding conditions on the West Side of Fresno County.
- VIII. Support legislation which provides Federal assistance through the Title IV-E foster care program to subsidize kinship guardianship programs, to support families in which children are being raised by grandparents or other relatives.
- IX. Support the amendment of the Public Health Service Act to award grants to states to establish systems of individualized mental health treatment and family support services to children who are in custody or in danger of entering the custody of the state for the purpose of receiving mental health services.
- X. Support appropriation to establish and support Neighborhood Resource Centers throughout Fresno County.
- XI. Support regulatory changes to allow Medicaid coverage for adults, ages 18 to 64, in free-standing twenty-four hour facilities, regardless of the number of beds in the facility.
- XII. Support funding for an Institutional Network (INET) Expansion.
- XIII. Support funding for e-conference capability on the INET, county-wide.
- XIV. Support funding for design, land acquisition and construction of a new Central library.
- XV. Support funding for disaster relief and preparedness activities including transportation, shelter, healthcare and other basic assistance.
- XVI. Seek funding for the design and construction of the new Center for Agriculture and Food Safety.
- XVII. Pursue co-location of USDA at the new Center for Agriculture and Food Safety.

- XVIII. Support legislation and funding to develop a new regional public health laboratory including infrastructure, workforce, technology and authority to provide comprehensive and efficient chemical, biologic, radiologic, microbial and environmental laboratory testing services.
- XIX. Develop strategy to recognize savings in the issuance of Pension Obligation Bonds, based on original unfunded actuarial liability, using appropriate present values.
- XX. Seek reinstatement of federal matching funds for Child Support Performance Incentives.
- XXI. Support the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program for aerial firefighters.

## **GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

### **County Operations and Finance**

- I. Support reduction of regulations that increase the cost of operating existing Federal programs without a corresponding increase in compensation to address the burden of meeting these regulations.
- II. Support legislation to require the Federal government to fully finance all federally mandated programs and services provided by counties.
- III. Support continuance/reinstatement of block grant allocations for programs and services to be delivered by county government when those allocations enhance local discretion and flexibility to meet unique local circumstances.
- IV. Support legislation that permits an adequate portion of any Federal grant to provide for program administration costs, particularly in the case of housing grants.
- V. Support legislation increasing the authorization of Payment-In-Lieu-Taxes (PILT) to recover adequate compensation for the services provided by local governments and special districts to public lands and encourage full appropriation of PILT monies owed to counties.
- VII. Support the authorization and appropriation of funds to address any modifications to the Help America Vote Act to ensure the compensation of local governments for mandated election requirements.
- VIII. Support mitigation of the countywide fiscal impacts associated with retirement of 200,000 acres of farmland from the Westlands Water District.
- IX. Seek reinstatement of federal matching funds for Child Support Performance Incentives.
- X. Support federal reimbursement of the County's costs associated with services to undocumented immigrants, including incarceration, public safety, and emergency medical services.

### **Human Services**

- I. Support legislation that establishes a coordinated system of results-oriented accountability involving all human services agencies.
- II. Support legislation that refines confidentiality laws to facilitate the appropriate sharing of information and promotes maximum collaboration and coordination among involved agencies.
- III. Support federal initiatives for e-Government including paperless systems and electronic signatures.

- IV. Support full funding for the Social Services Block Grant program, which in California is used primarily to augment County and State funded in-home supportive services for elderly and disabled persons, and to coordinate services to disabled children.
- V. Support retention of entitlement nature of the Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoptions Assistance program (USC Title 42, Chapter 7, Subchapter IV-E), and legislation that aims to eliminate out-dated rules that base the child's eligibility for funds on parental income and circumstances.
- VI. Pursue revisions to the existing Foster Care and Adoptions Assistance (USC Title 42, Chapter 7, Subchapter IVE) provisions in regards to Payments to the States to ensure that uncollectible debts are not subject to Federal remittance.
- VII. Support legislation to establish and appropriate funding for a national program of Adult Protective Services that will enable reporting, outreach, intervention, and services to vulnerable disabled and elderly persons in need of protection.
- VIII. Support federal funding to increase the number of bilingual/bicultural professionals in the areas of education, mental health, healthcare and welfare by providing stipends, tutors and incentives to employers providing field experience.
- IX. Support legislation to provide tax benefits to builders and developers willing to build or rehabilitate real estate that can provide emergency, transitional and permanent supportive housing for individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders.
- X. Support legislation to provide incentives for bilingual/bicultural mental health professionals to work in rural areas with financial stipends, deferment of student loans and low cost housing.
- XI. Pursue legislation to provide incentives to child psychiatrists, and other specialty children's health professions, to complete their education and work in localities experiencing a shortage.
- XII. Pursue legislation to provide tax incentives to open, maintain and operate adolescent mental health facilities in underserved areas.

### **Health Care**

- A. Support legislation that provides Federal funding of the cost of Federally mandated health care services provided to undocumented or illegal residents.
- B. Support legislation that includes the following principles relating to mental health care and substance abuse disorder care for any national health care plan:
  - 1. Assure continuation of a single, integrated system of care for seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth.
  - 2. Assure the availability of a continuum of services for those with substance abuse disorders and the mentally ill.

3. Assure that any national health care plan includes effective cost-containment measures.
- C. Support legislation that would increase funding for substance abuse treatment and prevention services.
  - D. Support legislation that provides funding for a pilot program to expand and enhance substance abuse and mental health services to all youths incarcerated at the juvenile justice campus that have been identified as having substance abuse and mental health issues.
  - E. Support legislation to allow health agencies to purchase pharmaceuticals outside of the United States.

#### **Public Health**

- A. Support legislation which will increase county flexibility in organizing, administering and utilization of categorical public health, mental health and substance abuse funds to reflect local needs and priorities.
- B. Support legislation that corrects current inequities in the distribution of Medicaid Federal financial participation per beneficiary among the states.
- C. Support legislation and funding that increases state and local public health laboratory infrastructure, workforce, technology and authority to provide comprehensive and efficient chemical, biologic, radiologic, microbial and environmental laboratory testing services at the local and regional level.

#### **In-Home Supportive Services**

- A. Oppose any legislation that is discriminatory to share-of-cost calculations.
- B. Support legislation to modify the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) calculation from per capita income to also include poverty levels for under funded counties.

#### **Employment and Public Assistance**

- A. Support legislation that provides maximum flexibility to local government for the design and implementation of welfare programs, and takes into consideration local economic and job market conditions, the need for innovative job training activities, and the need for job creation activities.
- B. Support legislation that emphasizes job placement activities with adequate support services, and that factors local unemployment rates into the expected welfare-to-work participation rates.

- C. Support legislation that expands welfare-to-work federal allowable activities to include education (i.e., Adult Basic Education, General Equivalency Diploma, English as a Second Language, vocational education, and post-secondary education).

### **Workforce Development**

- A. Support legislation that allows workforce development and employment and training funds (such as TANF, Workforce Investment Act and Welfare-to-Work) to be used in job creation or economic development activities to address the lack of job opportunities for the unemployed, especially in areas of high unemployment and poverty.
- B. Support workforce development reform which provides for block grants, local governance, and maximum local flexibility in the use of funding to achieve outcomes and maximize return on workforce investment.
- C. Provide funding for the development and expansion of training facilities of dislocated workers and workers with limited skills to reduce unemployment and to increase the earning capacity of workers in Fresno County.
- D. Support efforts of the Fresno County Workforce Investment Board and the Employment and Temporary Assistance Department in seeking federal funding for training and placement of workers.

### **Children Services**

- A. Support legislation which enhances prevention, early intervention and family preservation services and accelerates permanency planning and funding for children at-risk or in out-of-home care.
- B. Support legislation that provides maximum flexibility in the blending and/or redirection of categorical funding and promotes the concept of preserving the family as opposed to out-of-home placement.
- C. Support legislation that integrates Child Welfare Services and mental health, and promotes coordination of the variety of children and family services and support programs provided by the Human Services departments.
- D. Support legislation that promotes the linkage of assistance to children and allows that assistance to follow the child.
- E. Support legislation to restore funding levels for Child Welfare Services (Title XX) to the level appropriated prior to the enactment of Welfare Reform.
- F. Support legislation to: preserve uncapped funding for Title IV-E funding; expand support for subsidized guardianships; guarantee resources to enhance the capacity and quality of child welfare workforce; and, strengthen accountability of the child welfare system.



- G. Support funding for substance abuse services for adolescents at-risk or in out-of-home placements, and their families.
- H. Pursue Department of Education appropriation to establish and support Neighborhood Resource Centers throughout Fresno County.
- I. Pursue legislation that increases transitional housing opportunities for emancipating foster youth.

### **Refugee Programs**

- A. Support legislation that promotes the enforcement of illegal immigration restrictions.
- E. Support legislation that links the number of refugee admissions to the level of Federal funds provided, provides for a reasonable time frame during which refugees are eligible for full Federal funding of their public assistance costs, and ensures that funds are available immediately upon secondary migration.
- C. Support legislation authorizing refugees under the Cash Assistance Program (otherwise known as "time-expired" refugees), to continue to be eligible to receive employment and social services under the Targeted Assistance and Refugee Employment Social Services programs.
- D. Support legislation increasing funding to local governments for refugee housing.

### **Economic Development**

- I. Support projects that promote economic development through new technologies that maximize the effectiveness of water use for urban, environmental, and agricultural applications, such as the International Center for Water Technology.
- II. Support increased CDBG funding, including adequate funding for administrative costs, and increased local flexibility for the use of CDBG funds.
- III. Support legislation that would allow CDBG funds to be used when local assessment districts are formed.
- IV. Support Federal efforts to finance regional infrastructure projects that help promote the creation of industrial sites in incorporated and unincorporated areas of Fresno County.
- V. Support funding for the development and expansion of vocational training facilities in Fresno County.
- VI. Explore opportunities to further define and differentiate the urban, suburban, and rural areas of the County in relation to federal programs and funding.
- VII. Support amendment of the Small Business Reauthorization Act of 1997 to allow the creation of HUB zones and other tax incentive programs in Fresno County to stimulate economic development by providing Federal contracting opportunities to small businesses in low income or high unemployment areas.

- VIII. Support creation and funding of an Air Quality Empowerment Zone, similar to an economic empowerment zone, to inject additional resources into clean-up efforts by providing sustainable incentives for the research, development, implementation, and local manufacturing of clean-air products and processes.
- IX. Support mitigation of countywide fiscal impacts associated with the retirement of farmland and water allocation reductions on the West Side of Fresno County.
- X. Support funding for an Institutional Network (INET) Expansion.
- XI. Support funding for e-conference capability on the INET, county-wide.
- XII. Support projects that create regional multi-agency solutions to economic development problems. Encourage the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration to use the County of Fresno as a regional government that links other local governments together (for example, regional wastewater treatment facilities that provide job creation in value-added industries).
- XIII. Support legislation that provides federal tax credits for employers that hire new employees in areas with high unemployment for the promotion of business expansion and attraction.

### **Housing**

- I. Support full funding for the Home Investment Partnership Act (HOME) program, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, the Home Ownership and funding for multifamily housing programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- II. Support elimination of local matching fund requirements for the HOME program.
- III. Support legislation to make the HOME Program more workable in the rental market place by creating greater flexibility in its use.
- IV. Support legislation that requires the Federal government to develop affordable housing programs for heavily impacted areas, such as Fresno County, as part of the federal Refugee Resettlement program.
- V. Support continuance of funding levels for Rural Development housing and community development programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

### **Agriculture and Resources**

- I. Support efforts to bring additional water supplies to the County for the purposes of: 1) addressing current overdraft and water availability problems; 2) precluding future problems by ensuring that the water supply is in balance with the needs of agriculture while accommodating projected growth; and 3) protecting the needs of fish and wildlife while enhancing the recreational opportunities of the County.

- II. Support changes to statutes regulating public drinking water which promote a balance between public benefit and economic interests promote processes for comparative risk assessment based on good science, and which utilize best management practices to manage non-point source pollution.
- III. Support the inclusion of local standard enforcement in the revision to the Safe Drinking Water Act, to address specific health protection needs in specific situations.
- IV. Support technical clarification of the Central Valley Project Improvement Act to restore the original intent of the makers of the Act and promote accountability of benefits returned for funds and waters dedicated to specific causes.
- V. Support efforts to require Federal water management programs to protect the economy and water resources of the impacted county prior to the movement (i.e., transfer, contract assignment, redistribution, etc.) of water out of a county experiencing long-term groundwater overdraft.
- VI. Support changes to Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA) provisions to protect communities/areas from which Central Valley Project (CVP) water is being transferred via contract reassignments by affording the same protection to impacted areas as contained within CVPIA for water transfers.
- VII. Support legislation to permanently extend provisions of Public Law 106-393 (Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act), to continue forest reserve payments (Titles II and III) to counties for schools, roads, and resource projects to stimulate economies of rural communities and offset local effects of reduced resource utilization of federal lands.
- VIII. Support legislation requiring a surcharge on consumer electronic devices to be distributed to local governments to encourage proper disposal of devices.
- IX. Support continued Federal funding of valley agricultural research centers and the acquisition of surrounding land to provide a buffer zone from urban encroachment.
- X. Support legislation to provide funding for continued research of Pierce's Disease.
- XI. Support legislation and encourage risk assessment methods that recognize both the significance and vulnerability of the County's agricultural production when determining homeland security funding.
- XII. Support legislation that provides increased or continued funding for pest prevention and high-risk exclusion programs that protect County resources and industry from damage by pests not native to California or Fresno County.
- XIII. Support the construction of new water storage reservoirs, including construction of a new dam at Temperance Flat on the San Joaquin River, when there is a benefit to Fresno County and the reservoir is shown to be technically, environmentally and economically feasible.
- XIV. Seek funding for the design and construction of the new Center for Agriculture and Food Safety.

- XV. Support legislation and seek funding for new and existing agriculture related crime fighting programs, seek full funding for the ACTION Project, and support any and all other law enforcement mechanisms and efforts that help combat agriculture related crime, help with related prevention efforts and otherwise seek to protect the County's vital agricultural lands and economy.

### **Land Use**

- I. Support legislation amending the Endangered Species Act to: 1) promote a balance between conservation and economic impacts, require the identification of resources after holding public hearings in the affected jurisdictions, provide for government lands to be identified for habitat preservation before private lands and insure just compensation to property owners if lands are taken as a means of managing the identified resources; 2) mitigate the economic impact that results from a species being added to a list of endangered or threatened species; and 3) provide for waivers in the maintenance of County roadways due to public benefit/interest.
- II. Oppose any legislation that intends to limit or restrict the ability of states to collect revenue from Indian gaming activities.

### **Transportation**

- I. Support timely reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU with funding primarily directed to established and proven infrastructure programs such as the Surface Transportation, Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality, Highway Bridge, and Rural Road Safety programs that provide the greatest public benefit based on technical evaluations of performance, safety, air quality, and needs criteria.
- II. Support the continuation of State (Caltrans) certification of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) environmental reviews, or federal acceptance of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in lieu of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when CEQA process can be shown to be equivalent to, or more stringent than, the national process.
- III. Dedicate transportation revenues, including interest on Highway Trust Fund, to transportation purposes and continue the Revenue Aligned Budget Authority to balance year-to-year revenue shifts.
- IV. Support appropriations for the following long-term highway and transit projects:
- Support Federal funding of for improvements to State Route (SR) 99 and increase recognition of SR 99 as a transportation corridor of national importance.
  - Support Federal funding for improvements to State Route (SR) 180 between Interstate 5 and Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.
  - Support Federal funding for transportation, road and trail improvements along the Golden State Boulevard Corridor.

- Support Federal funding for Amtrak passenger rail service in the San Joaquin Valley and encourage improved passenger and freight rail service in the San Joaquin Valley.
  - Advocate for first-phase implementation of High Speed Rail that ties northern and southern California through the City of Fresno.
- V. Support reauthorization of PL 106-393 (Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000). Support Senate proposal for an extension of the act to continue funding to local schools and roads in counties which provide services to federal lands.

### **Administration of Justice**

- I. Support the continuation of Title IV-E funds and Targeted Case Management funding for services provided at the local level by Probation.
- II. Support the expansion of Medi-Cal coverage to allow for additional medical assessment services, particularly at the time of booking, and for medical services for out-of-custody juveniles on probation.
- III. Support legislation and funding for the Mentally Ill Offender Criminal Reduction (MIOCR) program, for adults and juveniles.
- IV. Support a level of funding for Methamphetamine programs that recognizes the extent of the problem in the San Joaquin Valley; continue and increase funding for the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) program.
- V. Support legislation that promotes crime prevention and intervention programs and provides funding at the local level.
- VI. Support the continuation of the Office on Violence Against Women.
- VII. Support legislation and increased funding to address domestic violence.
- VIII. Support legislation that provides funding for demonstration projects or programs dedicated to restorative justice.
- IX. Support legislation that provides programs for forgiveness of educational loans for criminal prosecutors and public defenders.
- X. Support full funding of the State Criminal Alien Assistance Program (SCAAP).
- XI. Support reinstatement of the U.S. Marshall CAP program to provide funding for the construction of jail space for federal inmates.
- XII. Seek funding for County programs that promote gang prevention, intervention and suppression programs.
- XIII. Support funding of a regional pilot project to eradicate marijuana on federal lands located in Fresno County.

### **Emergency Preparedness and Response**

- I. Support efforts to develop distribution strategies that deliver homeland security funding directly to local government and limit State administration.
- II. Support increased homeland security funding for agro-terrorism and public safety communications, and increased funding designated for training.
- III. Seek funding for data interoperability for multiple public safety agencies, i.e., law enforcement, fire, Emergency Medical Systems, transportation safety and Homeland Security for multiple jurisdictions.
- IV. Support the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) program for aerial firefighters.

### **Library**

- I. Support legislation that provides public libraries with convenient and low cost access to the Information Superhighway.
- II. Support legislation that strengthens the public's free access to information produced at taxpayer's expense and distributed through the Depository Library program.
- III. Support legislation that maintains access for Libraries to all copyrighted works under the "fair use" doctrine, regardless of format (hard-copy or electronic) of the work.
- IV. Support legislation that continues the Library Services and Technology Act, and oppose any reduction in appropriations.
- V. Support legislation that provides funding for stipends to adult tutors in literacy programs.
- VI. Support funding for digital preservation through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) or other funding sources.
- VII. Support funding for design, land acquisition and construction of a new Central library.