

BLOG: Brandau calls out Gov. Brown's backward priorities

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In business, priorities are a must. Making the right choices is tough, especially in a world of limitless problems and limited resources. That's what makes leadership such a sought-after quality.



On the eve of tomorrow's groundbreaking for the state's high-speed rail project in Fresno, I have to agree with Fresno City Councilmember Steve Brandau's assessment that our leadership's priorities for the state are backward.

Brandau sent Brown, who was inaugurated today for a record fourth term as California governor, a letter outlining his concerns about the governor's priorities. It sums up the real problems facing the Central Valley, as well as the state. Here it is in its entirety:

Dear Governor Brown,

Congratulations Governor Brown on being sworn in for another four years as our Chief Executive. Tuesday you will make a rare visit to Fresno and the Central Valley to hold a groundbreaking for your legacy project the High Speed Rail. Although funded by our tax dollars, this event is an invite-only affair for your hand chosen supporters of this project. Those who have previously voiced concerns apparently didn't make the cut. I am one of them.

With all due respect Governor, this project is completely out of line with what our state needs at this time in our history. Today I am not criticizing the train or debating the pros and cons of the project. Indeed, I am thankful for every temporary job and dollar brought into the valley by the visiting contractors and their crews.

Governor my complaint here is with your priorities. Our Central Valley farms, businesses, towns and cities are struggling with a whole host of immediate needs, many of which are due directly to your policies and the focus, or lack thereof, from Sacramento.

We have an increasing public safety crisis due to the passage of Proposition 47 and your realignment policy. Fresno Police Chief Jerry Dyer told me recently we have seen a 26% increase in burglaries and auto theft since the passage of Proposition 47. Increased crime is a priority that deserves your visit to Fresno.

Transportation and the disrepair of our roadways is another priority that should rank higher on your "to do" list. The statewide Pavement Condition Index has fallen to 66% which is in the "at risk" category. Repairing our roadways is projected to cost over a hundred billion dollars and more than three-quarters of that is currently unfunded. Some cities may benefit from the bullet train but all of us would benefit from well-maintained roadways.

Finally we come to water. In our valley water directly equals jobs. Whether a farm worker or urban business owner, everyone is tied to water. Without water and the jobs that run our economy no one here will have the money to purchase one of your costly train tickets. Although you delayed it twice, the voters passed a water infrastructure bond last November.

Unfortunately, the way things work, our state bureaucracy will delay these projects from being complete for over a decade. Indeed, environmental lawsuits might kill these projects altogether.

We need you to do the same CEQA bypassing, red-tape cutting maneuvers that you used on High Speed Rail to fast track projects like Temperance Flat Dam and the other water infrastructure projects we need right now. Inaction on water will negatively overshadow any hypothetical legacy created by the bullet train.

Public safety, better roads and water infrastructure are just three issues that deserve a higher priority than this train. Addressing these critical needs would be an action that every Californian would support.

Respectfully,
Steve Brandau,
Council President, City of Fresno,
District 2

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