

## Brand: 'No bonuses if I'm elected mayor'

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### 1 Comment

At a press conference held this morning at City Hall, District 6 Councilmember Lee Brand promised to push for significant changes to Fresno's Transparency in City Government Act.

Brand's move came in response to what is being called 'Bonus-gate' — revelations that came to light late last week that Mayor Ashley Swearingin paid some of her top lieutenants, including City Manager Bruce Rudd, nearly \$300,000 in bonuses and deferred compensation during the past three years without telling members of the city council.

Brand, who was joined at the press conference by Councilmember Oliver Baines, said that the changes he planned to introduce in the city's Transparency Act "will put teeth into the Act and put Fresno at the forefront in terms of how we do business."

"The focus should be on solutions not problems," said Brand, who is running for mayor and hopes to replace termed-limited Swearingin in 2017.

"We are not here to quarrel about a bonus someone got or did not get," Baines said. "There was a lack of transparency. We did not serve the public well in the way this has happened and we're going to remedy that."

Brand, who actually authored Fresno's original Transparency Act in 2010, explained that the non-binding resolution he planned to introduce at Thursday's city council meeting only pertained to the 1 percent of city employees not covered under a union contract.

According to city records, Rudd received almost \$56,000 in bonuses between 2014 and 2015; Assistant City Manager Renena Smith was awarded \$10,000 bonuses in 2014 and 2015; and Police Chief Jerry Dyer received a \$20,000 bonus this year.

Union leaders reacted angrily after the Bonus-gate revelations came to light, accusing city officials of "nickel and diming" rank-and-file employees in the most recent round of contract negotiations while handing out bonuses to top-tier city officials already earning six-figure salaries.

Neither Brand nor Baines were willing to speculate how the Bonus-gate revelations might impact future negotiations with city bargaining units.

"That will be up to the city administration and unions," Brand said. "But going forward, everything is going to be out in the open."

Under Brand's proposed revised Transparency Act, any form of employee compensation that is greater than 5 percent will require formal approval by the city council.

"And all contracts will be available for public review at any time in the city clerk's office," Brand added.

If elected mayor, Brand vowed to do away with bonuses for city employees.

“As a businessman, personally, I don’t believe in bonuses,” he said. “You pay the person what they’re worth and what the City of Fresno can afford.”

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