

## Bridge...

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in his or her district, and the PR would indicate that the largess was a benefit provided by the supervisor.

**Re-election insurance.** Revenue sharing began with a \$10,000 per year per supervisor to grant for whatever project appealed to their fancy or whatever criteria they chose to use. That \$50,000 in pork was soon elevated to \$20,000 each, or \$100,00 per year. The "pork" grants are passed in the consent calendar by the board of supervisors without other consideration or debate of the merits. So, revenue sharing is taking your tax money and giving it to others, leaving the perception that it's a "gift from the supervisors."

With the Ketchikan bridge issue other senators objected, suggesting that funds be directed to repair bridges in Louisiana damaged by hurricane Katrina. Because of the criticism, Senator Stevens withdrew his bridge project, but directed that the \$320 million go to other Alaska uses. More recent investigation shows that friends/relatives of the senator happened to own some 32 acres on the off-shore island. Sometimes there are more underlying reasons for pork projects.

The Ketchikan airport serves mostly as a jump-off place for bush pilots taking sportsmen into the hinterland for hunting, fishing, or rafting experiences. When this writer visited Ketchikan some years ago the water birds nearly equalled the human population. Kingfishers were diving off the pier to fish and herons were fishing the shallows.

Ketchikan is a port stop of the ferry inland passage from Prince Rupert to

Sitka. It gained national attention in the mid-1930s when famous aviator Wiley Post and film star, humorist, and aviation buff Will Rogers, left Ketchikan in their Lockheed seaplane in an ill-fated attempt to cross the Pacific Ocean.

History buffs will note that in the feudal age kings and liege lords presented their chosen supporters with grants of land and money to insure their allegiance. The French have a phrase for this, "*Ce plus choses changeant, c'il se mantient le meme.*" The more things change the more they remain the same.

While Placer's revenue sharing has not reached the same level as the Ketchikan bridge, it has gone from \$50k to \$100k—next \$50K? \$250,000?

One is reminded of an anecdote of Winston Churchill. It seems that at a social gathering in London he accosted a grand lady. "Madame Witherspoon, for a £5 note would you spend the weekend with me at Checkers (his country estate)?" Certainly not was the reply. "How about £50,000, madame?" She replied, "Well that is different. I would consider that." Churchill responded, "Madame, we've established what you are, now we are haggling over the price."

Placer's revenue sharing has let the genie out of the bottle and it will be difficult to cap it. Perhaps placing such funding into regular items on the agenda would at least open the issue for public comment.

A recent article on Placer's "sharing" in another publication had these comments from some supervisors, "I think it's very effective and is good government." Effective it is, but not good government. Another comment, "A good way to invest in the community." If it's

such a good idea, place it on the agenda and discuss it. Supervisor Bruce Kranz probably said it best, "It gives the impression that this supervisor is giving the funding. I just don't believe I should be using county taxpayers money to fund something that looks like it's coming from them directly. A lot of these groups are community-based and shouldn't be counting on county money." Kranz does not use revenue sharing.

One critic of the program suggested, "It should not be used to fund community events and programs—it is a redistribution of the wealth." Some recipients are the Arts Council of Placer County, Feed the Hungry, E.V. Cain Middle School, Placer Nature Center, Placer Union High School, Boys & Girls Club, and Summer Festival at Tahoe. Most, if not all of these have other funding.

Good government would have such gifts as a regular budget item so the board of supervisors and public could comment and, perhaps, suggest better uses of their tax funds. But, the genie is out—can't be capped?

—Wally Reemelin

## No Action...

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pending litigation, and labor negotiations. By stretching these allowable exceptions, local officials commonly violate the spirit, if not the law. The Placer County Board of Supervisors and Auburn City Council may or may not be among the worst offenders, but they both do offend.

"We took no reportable action" is the commonly mandated report of a closed session of the Placer County Board of Supervisors or the Auburn City Council. At a subsequent meeting, the response to a question from a member of the public on an action item on the agenda is, "We already discussed that," or worse, "We are committed to this action," or some other reply that demonstrates that the members of the Placer County Board of Supervisors or the Auburn City Council did discuss and did take a reportable action in a prior meeting open to the public. Obviously, they are in violation of the spirit of the Ralph M. Brown Act in announcing, "We took no reportable action."

—Dan Sokol

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*Acts of Congress*  
Congress, of course, usually responds to public complaints not by fixing what is wrong—excessive regulation—but by shifting into demagogue mode, blaming the producers. "Price gouging" charges are leveled. Threats of applying price controls or wind-fall profits taxes fly through the air. It's unbelievable after the economic wreckage those same policies produced in the 1970s that they can still be trumpeted. But politicians have short memories and the enviros have only one objective, to shift all blame away from themselves.

## What Does "Non-Essential" Mean In Government?

The City of Lincoln bureaucrats announced that they discovered an unexpected \$1.2 million deficit in the 2005-06 budget. This shortfall is about ten percent of the estimated general fund spending allocation.

Not to worry! The city council is scheduled to make a mid-year correction at their February 13 meeting. The gap is expected to be closed by postponing replacing two department heads until July, by delaying the purchasing of new equipment, and by

eliminating *non-essential* travel.

Taxpayers of Lincoln have the right to ask why the budget includes non-essential travel or any other non-essential expense. Is equipment that can be so easily delayed really necessary? Are the positions for two department heads that can be left unfulfilled for five months needed at all? The critical question is, "Does Lincoln need any of the politicians and bureaucrats who are responsible for the ten-percent shortfall?"

—Dan Sokol

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